

An Exchange of Souls



**AN EXCHANGE
OF SOULS**

BY

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CHAPTER I

I MET Daniel Myas first in the winter of 1905, at Hamilton's house, in Paris. Hamilton married a Frenchwoman, and they lived in Paris for the greater part of the year. They were both terribly musical, and musicians of many nationalities came in to the house. Conversation, on the days when Madame received, was tryingly polyglot for a plain Englishman like myself.

As often happens at a first meeting. One received an impression which was in part erroneous and in part short of the truth. Until he spoke to me, I thought that Myas was a Frenchman. His necktie was aggressively French. It was bulgy and droopy and black silk. He used a little gesture. He had been speaking French to my hostess, and with a perfection that in an Englishman was almost unpatriotic. But he spoke English to me, and as only an Englishman can ever hope to speak it. It was not only a question of a perfect accent; he knew the latest phrases of the society in which he was moving. His talk with me was principally on the subject of the Paris restaurants; he seemed to have made a special study of the art of dining, and as a result of the experimental work he had slightly sacrificed his figure. He gave me the impression that I had much to learn. He was rather under the medium height and powerfully built. His eye was vivacious and his expression kindly. I noticed his hands particularly; they were rather too white and well-shaped.

Just as I was leaving I had a few words with my hostess about him. Madame was always amusing, but not always accurate. She told me that I had been talking to a great savant. No, he was not always so sweet-tempered as he appeared. For example, he always swore at his manicurist; but then he sent her sweets from Rumpelmayer's to make up for it. If he interested me, would I not meet him at dinner there on the following Wednesday? It further appeared that somebody with a name like a tropical disease would be playing the 'cello.

I accepted, and in this way began an acquaintance which I wish that I had never made. I say that deliberately. I liked Myas. I hope that this story will show that when he became my friend I accepted the duties of friendship. But he led me into a track where I was mazed and lost.

In the course of the next month I saw Myas frequently. He knew Paris well, and showed me much that I had not seen before. He was generally interesting, and sometimes astounding. One day he happened to speak, with a flash of that temper which Madame had led me to expect, of the extreme narrow-mindedness of medical men.

"Well, you are a medical man yourself, aren't you?"

"Oh yes," he said. "As a matter of fact

I am an M.D. of London, and at one time had a practice—a beastly practice in a beastly Somersetshire village. But as soon as I was in a position to give it up, I did so, and that was two years ago. I came into some money on my father's death."

"I see," I said. "And as soon as you became independent, your interest in medical science ceased."

“Goodness, no! You might almost say that was when it began. It is that which has kept me wandering round the foreign hospitals for the last two years. Research is absolutely lovely work. As a rule, it leads to nothing; when it does lead to anything, you get punished for it. You think you have found out something, you send a communication to the scientific press, and you metaphorically get your head bashed for your pains by your distinguished and learned colleagues. But don’t try to look as if you were interested in science. You can’t be, you know. You belong to the leisured classes. Come along, and we will lunch at Ledoyen’s.”

“If I belong to the leisured classes, that is more my misfortune than my fault. I’ll tell you all about that one of these days. What was your line of research, and who jumped on you?”

“Somebody or other on the *Lancet*. I should imagine from the style and knowledge displayed, that the office-boy is allowed to do a little reviewing in his spare time. Well, well, his a lesson to me. Never show children or fools half-finished work—there’s no better proverb than that.”

He was by way of making a joke of it, but it was quite obvious that in reality he was very sore about it, and for this reason I did not press him further on the subject.

It was my last day in Paris, and as we were smoking the post-luncheon cigarette, Myas asked me when we could meet again.

“Don’t know. Soon, I hope. Do you ever come to London?”

“Of course. Everybody does. I am not quite sure, but I think my work will send me there in the spring.”

We arranged that he should come to see me then at my little flat in St. James’s Place.

“And by that time,” he said, “I may be able to answer you more explicitly about my work.”

“Quite likely,” I said. So far, of course, he had not answered me at all.

The day after my return to London, I happened to meet at the Club an old friend of mine, Dr. Habaden. He is a mighty physician, with a right to put a decoration on his evening coat on suitable occasions. I asked him if by any chance he knew a Dr. Myas.

“Daniel Myas?”

“That’s him,” I said, with the usual disregard of grammar.

“Yes, I know of him. As a student he did rather brilliantly. Got a resident appointment at his hospital. Quarrelled with everybody about everything, and had to go. Then he bought himself a practice, and that was how I came across him. He brought a patient up from Somersetshire to see me. I don’t mind telling you that it was a devilish difficult case, and I found that Myas had diagnosed it correctly and treated it correctly.”

“Did the patient recover?”

“No; died. But that’s got nothing to do with it. He impressed me at the time as a very able man, quite beyond the run of the ordinary general practitioner. He’s given up practice and taken up research now, and he’s gone absolutely off the lines. You should see the kind of stuff that he’s been writing. A ghoulish business, I call it.”

“Ghoulish? How do you mean? What is it he does? ”

“Dr. Daniel Myas is making a special investigation of the moment of death. You understand? He makes observations of dying people. When the thing is practically over, and a decent man would go away, down swoops Myas with his ophthalmoscope and his electro-cardiograph and all the rest of his bag of tricks, like a scientific vulture. I should suppose he’s watched more deaths than any man living. Does his work abroad principally. And if the truth’s told, he has tried some rum-funny experiments, too-things that would never be tolerated in any hospital this side of the Channel.”

“I met him in Paris, you know, just the other day. He didn’t tell me that he was interested in death, and I should have said he was much more interested in his dinner. In fact, he didn’t impress me as a ghoul at all.”

“Oh, I don’t say he’s a ghoul in ordinary life. He probably wouldn’t talk shop to you. It’s the man’s work that is ghoulish.”

“I thought that science had declared all research to be good, and that in the sacred cause of truth nothing was to be considered horrible or disgusting?”

“Yes, that may be so if the research is directed to any useful end. But what good do you suppose Myas is doing? He is simply wasting time. We know what life is and what death is.”

“Do we?” I asked.

I knew the question would irritate Dr. Habaden, and it did.

“If you think you’re going to lure me into one of your profitless metaphysical discussions, you’re mistaken, my friend. The medical man knows when life ends and death begins, and in the case of a patient who is past remedial aid that is all he needs to know. There is plenty of good work to be done, and as Myas has the time and the means he might just as well devote himself to it. What is the ætiology of disseminated sclerosis? What’s the morbid anatomy of paralysis agitans? That’s the kind of thing he ought to be telling us. Cancer isn’t settled yet. I could name fifty things that might employ him usefully. He prefers to worry the last moments of poor devils for whom neither he nor anybody else can do anything. It’s sheer perversity, and I hate to see a man of his abilities so much misled.”

“Well,” I said, “Myas will be coming to town in the spring, and I shall be seeing him. Shall I tell him what you think about him?”

“Do. Mind, it won’t be any news to him. He’s been rapped over the knuckles already. But I suppose

he has some respect for my opinion, since he brought a patient to me, and I dare say he will believe that I am well disposed towards him.”

“Very well,” I said. “I’ll tell him, and it’s my belief that it won’t make a pin’s head of difference to him.”

“Oh, that’s very likely,” grunted Dr. Habaden, and went on up to the billiard-room.

CHAPTER II

I HAD expected that Myas would write beforehand to tell me when he would arrive. But it was not his habit to do what was expected. He called on me at my flat one morning early in the following March. He had already been in London some days, and said that he had got his work in Paris finished sooner than he had expected.

“At least ‘finished’ is not the word. I had gone as far as I could safely go there. There are some very brilliant gentlemen in Paris, and they have an inquiring turn of mind.”

He still wore flowing and abominable neckties, and his silk hat had a perfectly flat brim. In fact, as I observed to him, he looked more like a French charlatan than an English gentleman.

“Possibly,” he said, quite unperturbed “I am thankful to say that I am neither.”

He was energetic and vivacious, and there was a distinct note of triumph in his talk. When I asked him what he was so pleased about, he became vague in his expressions, and said that things had gone rather well with him in Paris. Then he changed the subject and began talking about the Hamiltons. They had received a serious blow. The Italian gentleman who played the ‘cello like an angel had been shown to be a trigamist. Morals had triumphed over music, and the Hamiltons had blotted him out. They had now gone to Rome for Easter, he told me.

He refused to stay at my little flat. He said that his plans were too undecided, and his temperament was too erratic; and that he did not wish to make himself a perfect nuisance. “But,” he said. “I will come and feed, if you like. Food is the one subject to which you have given any serious study.”

That statement, by the way, is, as I told him, a grotesque untruth. I took him off to the club with me, and gave him a quite simple and unpretentious luncheon. He was pleased to be enthusiastic about it, and I told him that he was making a deal of unnecessary and unseemly cackle.

“Don’t say that,” he said. “I know what the enthusiasm of your life is. You are not one of the illogical and nervous weaklings who are ashamed to eat and drink.”

“Are there such people?”

“Of course there are. They’re a feature of the age. They browse on breakfast cereals and drink ginger-beer. The way the consumption of alcohol is decreasing in this country is perfectly appalling.”

He paused to take a cup of black coffee. He refused the liqueur and proceeded—

“I have dined out a few times since I have been over here, and I have noticed things. One of the best wines is never drunk at all. It is always offered—apparently as a kind of ritual—and always refused. Although dinners have been made very much shorter, most women and some men refuse the joint. Dinner is becoming a farce. The really tragic thing about it is that these dyspeptic duffers seem to

have the idea that their physical incapacity makes for refinement and mental improvement. It does nothing of the sort. Food for the body is food for the mind; the two are inseparably associated. Tell me now, what period in English history produced the finest men—the finest statesmen, generals, admirals, artists?”

“Well, I’m not an historian, but I suppose there is no dispute about that. Roughly speaking, the period would be the latter part of the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries.”

“Of course. And that was a hearty age. It was an age of beef and beer, and it was also an age of courage and inventions, which is precisely what one would have expected. Pitt drank his two bottles of port, went into the House of Commons, and spoke magnificently. There was oratory in those days, and there was consequent enthusiasm. The modem member of Parliament sips barley-water and stutters statistics, mostly wrong, and national enthusiasm is at a low ebb, which is also what one would expect.”

“I wonder if there is anything in all this?” I said.

“It can hardly be otherwise. After all, the stomach is the one fundamental thing. It exists in the very lowest organisms, which have neither limbs nor brain. It is practically the first part of a man to get into working order. Its function is correct, before the baby can speak, or walk, or co—ordinate his movements. In fact, if I wanted to determine the Ego, I might be more likely to find the clue in the stomach than in the brain.”

“Look here,” I said. “What on earth do you mean by determining the Ego?”

“Well, in what does your ‘self’ consist? You would probably tell me that it consists in the association of your mind and your body. Now does it? When the mind has practically vanished, and no longer suffices even for a man’s simplest needs, his life is still carefully preserved in an asylum. This would not be the case if it were not believed that the man’s self was still there. When the man’s body is dead and has decomposed, it is held by all religious people that the man’s self still persists—that his personality is continued in another world; and perhaps science has rather more to say for this view than most men of science are aware. All of which is abominably dull talk after luncheon, isn’t it?”

“Not to me,” I said. “I have been getting rather interested in your work lately.”

“You flatter me. And what do you know about it anyhow?”

“I know what that great and good man Dr. Habaden has told me.”

“Dr. Habaden is a perfectly sound man in his own line, which is rather a terrific thing to be. It is quite detrimental to a sense of proportion. He sees a few blades of grass and he misses the landscape. I suppose my distinguished and learned colleague damned me as usual?”

“Oh, yes. Damned you very heartily, and told me to tell you so.”

“Why?”

“He thinks you are a man of great ability, wasting your time out of perversity. He says you ought to be studying the ætiology of insanity, or the cure of cancer, or some other problem which really does need solution. He also suggests that you worry the last moments of dying patients, when they ought to be left at peace.”

“Seems to have been saying a lot of sweet things about me,” said Myas grimly. “Well, I needn’t bother you with it. It’s not your business. You belong to the leisured classes.”

“You accused me of that before. It is true that I have no profession, and the only profession I ever wanted to have was not medical. But all the same I—”

“Hold on,” said Myas. “What was it you wanted to go in for?”

“Army. The doctors wouldn’t pass me. Ten years ago my people tried to get me to go into Parliament, but I had no ambitions that way. Still, I’ve got lots of friends, and I’m keen on lots of things, and I do occasionally think. Of course, I don’t know what your work is, but if it lies in the direction of the determination of self—”

“That is precisely it.”

“Then it must be very interesting. Every man who thinks at all must ask himself sometimes, ‘What am I?’ And he has not got the answer.”

“Look here, you should ask my esteemed colleague Dr. Habaden that. Put it in another form, and ask him what life and death are.”

“I did,” I said, “and he was pretty sick about it. He said that he knew when life ended and death began, and that was all we needed to know.”

“Well, I deny that. I say there is no limit to what we need to know. I say, too, that the very first things which we need to know are the great elemental things. Let me know exactly in what ‘self’ consists. Let me be able to isolate ‘self’ from its usual concomitants of mind and body, by which alone it has hitherto been cognizable. To isolate the ‘self’ is to add to the dignity of humanity; it is to exhibit humanity with the sources of all human frailty left out. You must surely see that this is fine work. If I can do that, then all the minor points, about which Habaden is so desperately anxious, will be added unto it. It seems to me that he wants me to begin at the wrong end of the stick. He calls my attention to details of more or less importance, when I am looking for first principles.”

“Let me understand you,” I said. “It comes to this. You are trying to comprehend—to capture—to isolate—the human soul.”

Myas glanced at his watch. He shrugged his shoulders.

“That is the theologian’s name for it,” he said. “Names matter much less than facts. I’ve got my appointment at the hospital, and I must be off now. But if you are really interested, we can discuss the

matter later, and I can tell you how the thing goes.”

“Do,” I said. “I want to hear about it.”

CHAPTER III

FOR a fortnight I did not see Dr. Myas and heard nothing from him. I had not got his address, or I should certainly have written to him. I was extremely annoyed about it, and not merely because his neglect seemed to me unfriendly. He had promised to let me hear more of the very curious and interesting work on which he was engaged, and I was anxious to hear more. The matter had haunted my mind a good deal.

I am not an erudite man, and I am not a philosopher, and I had been puzzled by a point on which neither the erudite nor the philosophical seemed to help me at all. I refer to the way the mind acts on the body and the body on the mind.

A small piece of paper is placed on the hand of a man who has been hypnotized, and he is told that this will produce a blister. The blister does actually appear, but it is mind, and not a piece of paper, which has caused it. Every doctor knows how important in some cases the mental attitude of a patient is. With a fixed determination to recover, and a belief that he will recover, recovery does take place. Without this determination and belief, the man sinks and dies. The whole secret of the occasional successes of "Christian Science" lies here. It is as true that body acts on mind. A certain state of the liver produces unfounded melancholy. A certain state of the lungs produces an equally unfounded hope—the characteristic *spes-phthisica*. The hypodermic injection of a drug produces the full feeling of happiness. Everybody knows these things, but so far I had found no satisfactory explanation of them.

I asked a physiologist what was the connection between mind and body, and where was the bridge between them. He told me that they were not connected in any way, but merely associated, much as the shadow is associated with the thing which casts the shadow.

I put this view before a well known metaphysician, a man who spoke of all practical science with gentle contempt. "Yes," he said, "that is about right. But which is the shadow?"

This was not very illuminative, but if, as Myas had confirmed, both mind and body were but concomitants of the soul and self, it was easy to see how through the soul the one might affect the other. A man at Knightsbridge, wishing to speak to a man in the City, does so through the Telephone Exchange. It seemed to me possible that the soul might constitute a somewhat similar exchange. It might receive from the body and convey to the mind, or it might receive from the mind and convey to the body. Of course Myas had proved nothing, he had given me no details, he had narrated no special discovery of his which had led him to his conclusions. And there was one other point which made me cautious. Myas had already shown me, in the way in which he discussed the question of diet and in other conversations I had had with him, a distinct preference for the unaccepted view; and this preference was often a source of weakness. There is a type of mind which always falls in love with the minority, and suffers in consequence from that blindness to facts which is supposed to be incidental to those who fall in love. Still, I was intrigued. I wanted to hear what the man had to say. I wanted to go into the matter further.

I hope that the above does not give any false impression of myself. I am no profound student of such questions. I pretend to be no more than just an ordinary man of the world. But even to the most ordinary it seems to me that such things must occasionally offer both an interest and a perplexity. It does not destroy one's interest in politics or in bridge; it does not spoil one's fondness for sport, or upset one's convictions as to the way a man should deport himself; but it does occur to the mind now and again at odd moments. Ordinary men like myself rarely speak of such things, it is true, for we talk mostly trivialities. But I fancy that most of us do sometimes think of such things.

Consequently, I was rather glad, as I was walking down Piccadilly one Monday afternoon, to hear behind me the deep and sonorous voice of Dr. Myas calling me by name. He looked more abominably French than ever.

I shook hands with him, and told him I trust with cheerfulness—that he had treated me disgracefully, and that on the whole he had better go to the devil.

“My dear Compton,” said Myas, “if I have treated you badly, it is only because other people have treated me much worse. You see before you a martyr to science, or rather to the men of science. A grievance occupies one's mind to the exclusion of everything else. I confess that I had forgotten you, but I am glad to be reminded again. Now then, I am going as far as the fruit-shop, and then across the parks, and you may just as well come with me.”

“I shall not,” I said. “I am going on to Knightsbridge.” But as a matter of fact I did go with him as far as St. James's Park Station. At the fruit—shop opposite the Green Park he purchased roses and strawberries. I heard the address to which they were to be sent, and I told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself.

“You have an absolutely evil mind,” said Myas. “She was by way of polishing my nails, and incidentally she polished off the whole of the first joint of my fingers with wash-leather and pumice. If you like that kind of thing I don't. It hurts. I swore and she wept. Hence the strawberries.”

“That's a very silly story,” I said. “I'd sooner hear who has been ill-treating you scientifically, and how.”

“You remember that when I last left you I was going to keep an appointment at the hospital with which I was at one time connected. I wanted to obtain there certain facilities for my experimental work. I was refused. At any rate I was so hedged in with conditions and qualifications that the thing became impossible for me. I have tried other hospitals with a similar result. That is the way the scientific investigator is treated in this rotten country.”

“All right,” I said. “If you don't like it, why don't you leave it? Who's stopping you? Skip back to Paris again. That hat of yours would feel a good deal more at home there, and so would your nostalgic necktie.”

“No,” said Myas decidedly, “I am not going. Here they take no serious interest in my work, but in Paris they take just a little too much. Everything I do is watched. Inquiries are frequent. If I went back to Paris, some man would take advantage of my preliminary work and would possibly get to the goal

before me.”

“I wonder, Myas that you have the cheek to talk like that. You were quite right when you told me that men of your profession were narrow-minded. You are a case in point. What on earth does it matter who makes a discovery, so long as the discovery is made? You are not a scientific martyr at all. You are only selfish and greedy. What do you say to that?”

“I don’t pretend to transcend human nature. If somebody managed to sneak your watch, you would not say that so long as somebody enjoyed the watch it didn’t matter who it was. You also would be selfish and greedy.”

“But then I’m not posing as a scientific martyr. Hospitals are not established solely for research, and I have not the least doubt that you wanted something which was quite improper and illegitimate. I gathered from what your friend Habaden told me—”

“He’s no friend of mine. Damn him, anyhow. He was one of the men who wanted to put the drag on the wheel.”

“Well, what are you going to do about it? Have you got a plan at all?”

“I have—a very definite plan. Some time ago I made the mistake of showing children and fools half—finished work. I think I told you about it. I published the results of some of my investigations and the deductions I had made from them. Really I ought to have known my learned and distinguished colleagues better. I had broken the first commandment, which is that you shall make no new departure. You may continue work which has already been begun, and may make fresh discoveries in it, and be complimented and K.C.V.O.’d. But originality and imagination are the unforgivable sins. Very well, then. I shall publish nothing further at present. In spite of the hospitals, I have found a way by which I can continue my work here, and I intend to do it. But nothing more will be published until I can give an absolute demonstration of my determination of the Ego. The fact which they can see and test must convince.”

“When you spoke of this before you said that mind and body were but the usual concomitants of self or soul, and that neither separately nor in association did they constitute self or soul.”

“Something of the kind,” said Myas. “Extraordinary that you should have remembered it.”

“Not at all. Now if science had chosen to deny, say, the existence of sheep, I can understand that you could produce the sheep and demonstrate it. But I do not see how you are to demonstrate the existence of the human soul.”

“Don’t you? I have given up explaining my work now. I will be judged by results. And I tell you this definitely—before this year is out I will demonstrate the existence of the soul to you personally.”

“If you mean that seriously I’m quite content.”

“I do. And here by the way is my station.”

Before we separated, I asked him for his address. I was not quite sure which of our hotels could reach the high standard of luxury that Myas had habitually demanded. Myas smiled whimsically.

“I am living at 121 Knox Street. Know it?”

“Oh, probably, but I don’t recall it for the moment.”

“It is a back street in the Walham Green neighbourhood.”

I said sardonically that he seemed determined to be right in the centre of things, and that I hoped he was comfortable.

“The place suits my purposes. I have four rooms over a little shop that sells newspapers and tobacco, and I have made them a little more possible than they were when I took them. The shop is kept by a widow, Mrs. Lade, and her daughter, and they wait on me—so far as a man of my simple habits requires any attendance at all.”

I was astonished, of course. The best hotels of Paris had struggled in vain to be good enough for Dr. Myas. He had pointed out their defects to courteous and long-suffering managers. I had never known a man who required more attendance or was more particular as to the character of it. And now he had taken lodgings in a back street in Fulham, with a widowed tobacconist to wait on him. I supposed it was some fantastic whim of his, and I do not encourage fantastic whims. People who try not to be like other people are very tiresome. As I was sure that Myas expected me to ask many questions about his extraordinary selection, I would not gratify him by asking any at all.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN I accepted Myas's invitation to dine with him at the Ritz a few days later, I did so with my eyes open.

"I ought to tell you," his letter said, "that I am bringing with me a Mr. Vulsame, a young surgeon who is in practice not far from here. He will be having a great treat, and I can remember that I once expressed agreement with your dictum, that the young man who is having a great treat is always a great nuisance. Briefly, Vulsame, though he is useful to me, will not suit your fastidious taste. At the same time, I shrink from spending a whole evening with him by myself, and you can help me considerably if you will. I believe that under a highly conventional exterior you conceal some slight kindness of heart, or I would not venture to ask it. Do come and lend a hand with the beggar."

I replied that I should be charmed. One meets so many bounders that one more or less does not greatly matter. Besides, I was interested in Myas.

Myas himself was at his very best and perfectly delightful, but frankly, it was rather an awful evening. Vulsame had good looks, of rather a coarse and common kind, and his dress and manners were enough to make angels weep. He called me "Sir" previous to the champagne, and "old cock" afterwards. He bragged absurdly. Somewhere about nine o'clock we got him to some stupid music—hall, where he was particularly anxious to see that appalling abomination, a "female impersonator." We came too late for this particular turn, at which he was very angry and I was very pleased. His comments on women and life were distinctly Rabelaisian, and Myas had to get him to speak in a lower tone. Throughout the evening Myas showed much tact in his management of the man. I think it was my good fortune to please Mr. Vulsame; at any rate, he asked me to drop in some evening in a friendly way. I cordially accepted the invitation, and to make the thing more realistic, put his visiting card in my pocket. But it can hardly be necessary to say that it was not my intention to let the thing go any further. I fully expected that that night I was seeing Mr. Vulsame for the last time. As it happened, I was destined to see him many times. Myas took him on to supper somewhere or other afterwards, but I thought I had done enough philanthropical work for one night, and pleaded an engagement.

During the whole evening Myas made no reference of any kind to his work, though he talked with a good deal of wit and acumen of most other subjects. I did not gather why he had taken lodgings in Fulham, nor why he was so desperately anxious to give this Mr. Vulsame a great treat. However, it was none of my business, and I made no attempt to get any information. It was for him to make the next move, if he cared about it.

One day in the following week, while I was at lunch in my rooms, the telephone bell went. My man, who attended to it, brought me word that Dr. Myers wished to speak to me. "I said I would inquire if you were in," the man added. He is a discreet fellow.

I guessed, of course, that Myers was telephonic for Myas, and went to hear what he had to say. He told me that he was very much depressed and worried, and that it would do him good to see some normal and commonplace person like myself. Would I come and see his new rooms?

As it happened, I had a blank afternoon, and I said that I would come with pleasure.

I had never seen Myas depressed or worried, and I gathered that information was awaiting me.

I told the driver of the taxicab to take me to Walham Green. There I dismissed him, and proceeded on foot in search of 121 Knox Street. I wanted to take a leisurely view of the neighbourhood, with which I was unfamiliar.

Knox Street is dull, and grey, and narrow. It contains many shops, and most of them look as if they were on the verge of bankruptcy. Everything in the windows seemed to be offered at sacrificial prices and far under cost. And apparently trade was possible in the things that one generally throws away. Curious and obscene rags were being sold as second-hand clothing. Soiled and aged back numbers of magazines had a price put upon them. As long as you got a lot for a penny, it did not seem to much matter what you got. Each shop displayed notices of a familiar and even slangy character. “Stop that cough!” shrieked the chemist. “Here’s a Sunday dinner for you,” cried the butcher. Mrs. Lade seemed to be doing rather better than some of her neighbours. She offered for sale many different things. The solid basis of the trade was apparently penny novelettes and Woodbine cigarettes, but it also branched out into sweetmeats and mouth-organs.

There was no private door, and I entered the shop. Had I been dishonestly inclined, I might have snatched up a couple of mouth-organs and made a bolt for it. Nobody was there to prevent me. But from behind a door, which was half a window with a red curtain over it, at the back of the shop, there came voices. The first voice was, I diagnosed correctly, the voice of a fat and elderly woman.

“It may be all right, and I expect it is all right, for you’re a good girl, Alice; but what I say is, that it don’t look right, and sooner or later other people in the street will be bound to notice it, and if I was doing my duty, I shouldn’t allow it to go on.”

The second voice was much younger, and rather plaintive. Despite a London accent, it was not unpleasant in quality.

“I’m sure he always treats me with respect —with most perfect respect. And why I should miss a chance of improving myself I can’t see. It’s most kind of him. And I can tell you this, he’s not a gentleman that will stand much interference—not from nobody. If you want to lose the rent, paid regular as it is

“Setting up there for hours with him like that!” said the fat voice indignantly. “I don’t call it—”

I thought the time had come to rap sharply on the floor with my umbrella. Through the red-curtained door came Mrs. Lade. She looked a conscientious, kindly, rather worried woman. She was fat and moved slowly. With a fold of her grey apron she concealed her red hands from the glance of the curious.

“Dr. Myas?” I said.

“Were you wishful to see him?”

“Yes,” I said. “That was the idea. I am Mr. Compton.”

Mrs. Lade opened the red-curtained door again and called to an invisible Miss Lade: “Gentleman to see Dr. Myas. Just take him up, Alice, will you?” Then she raised a flap of the counter and turned to me. “If you’ll step this way, sir.”

I stepped that way, and behind the red-curtained door I found a very beautiful girl. Her hair reminded me of the days in my extreme youth, when I kept silkworms; it was just the colour of the natural silk, and she had any amount of it. Her eyes were a greyish-blue. Her face was well—cut and delicate. When she saw an actual stranger and spoke with him, it was apparently her habit to blush slightly. She was rather above medium height, with a slight graceful figure. Her dress was plain and quiet. She took me up some rather dingy stairs, and tapped at a door which had been newly painted. The deep voice of Myas bade us come in.

Myas flung down the book that he was reading, and shook hands with me. I noticed, by the way, that the book was *Alice in Wonderland*. I took one of his cigarettes, and sat down to talk to him.

“Before we go any further,” I said, “tell me how is our dear friend, Mr. Vulsame?”

Myas grinned in a melancholy way. “I managed him beautifully. I gave him supper. I brought him back here in a taxicab. I kept him here for an hour, and took him to his own place in another taxicab. And it was really not until he reached home that he was actually drunk.”

“It seemed to me that he was rather nearer that blessed condition than I cared about most of the evening.”

“No, I assure you,” said Myas. “Even when he got to his own home he was not incapable, and he was very, very happy. Speaking seriously, I’m awfully obliged to you for helping me with him. He’s rather a useful man to me.”

“Useful? How?”

“Hadn’t it occurred to you? I should have thought it would have been fairly obvious. I have still a little experimental work that I must do. And the hospitals refuse to give me the opportunities that I want. Vulsame has a practice—quite a large practice—in a poor neighbourhood. You see he inspires no sense of shame, and people are sure they can tell him everything. Frequently he has cases which are of interest to me and have a bearing on my work. When that happens, he lets me know, and I come in as Mr. Vulsame’s assistant. Mark you, I get none of the qualifications and conditions that the hospital wanted to lay down. As Mr. Vulsame’s assistant, I do just exactly as I think right. Naturally I remunerate Mr. Vulsame. I also at times think it expedient to remunerate the relatives of the patient. When I came here, my friend, I did not do it merely to surprise you. It was essential that I should be living and working in a poor neighbourhood. With the expenditure of a very few sovereigns, I can get what I want. The relatives actually like it; it gives them so much money to spend on the funeral baked—meats.

“You’re a gruesome beast, Myas,” I said. “If you’re not careful, you’ll make this place too hot to hold you, and Vulsame’s practice will go pop.”

“Very likely,” he said, with indifference. “At present I am being careful.” I looked round the room. The walls were newly papered in a flat tint. The furniture was all new, not strictly artistic, but fairly good and comfortable.

“You didn’t find all these things here when you came, did you?” I asked.

“Lord, no! The rooms were empty. I went to Tottenham Court Road, gave them a rough idea of what I wanted and the price I would pay, and Tottenham Court Road did the rest. As long as the stuff was comfortable, and none of the things had any pattern on them, I did not mind much.”

“What’s your objection to pattern?”

“All pattern is an abomination. It annoys you because it is repeated. And then, where it has to stop because there is no more of the blessed curtain or wall-paper, it annoys you because it is not repeated. It reminds me too much of my fellow-men—so many of them and all just alike. Now you, of course, would suffer patterns gladly.”

“I don’t worry. I’m not particularly cracked about anything of that kind. Why should I enjoy patterns?”

“The thing’s obvious. Your one aim in life is to resemble as closely as possible every other man in the same position in life, and their aim is to resemble each other and you. Any one of you would sooner commit a murder than wear the wrong necktie. Not cracked? Of course you’re cracked.”

“And you’re quite sane, I suppose.”

“Absolutely,” said Myas, with conviction.

“Very well, then. How’s that girl getting on with her lessons?”

“Go to the devil!” said Myas. “And I suppose the girl can go to the devil as well?”

Myas smote the palm of one hand with the fist of the other. “My word,” he said. “How absolutely wrong you sordid and worldly people can get in your judgment. However, there is just this to be said for you. You live and learn. You’ll get to know that girl better. Now then, let’s speak of other things.”

CHAPTER V

“LOOK here,” said Myas. “You must see the rest of my bachelor establishment.” He opened the folding doors at the end of the room. “Here, for example, we observe my dining—room—furnished by Tottenham Court Road for ?35, and looking exactly like a dining—room which has been furnished by Tottenham Court Road for ?35.”

“What do you want a dining—room for?” I said. “You can’t possibly feed here.”

“Can and do,” said Myas.

I walked to the window, which opened down to the floor. From it an iron staircase led down to a narrow slip of ground, which was by way of being a garden. A gardener would call it a back yard. It was a weary, cat-haunted spot between high and blackened walls, but I noticed that there were two line old mulberry trees in it. There was also a newly erected building, looking somewhat like a studio. This was raised a little from the ground, with three steps up to the door of it. I asked Myas what it was.

“That’s where I do my work. That door in the wall at the further end of the garden opens into Durnford Place. Durnford Place runs parallel to Knox Street, and I’m not quite sure whether Durnford Place is at the hack of Knox Street, or vice versa.”

“Both, I should imagine.”

“Anyhow, it’s a very useful door, for it enables me, and incidentally my friends, to get up to my rooms without going through Mrs. Lade’s part of the house. When you come to see me again, as I hope you will soon, you must come in that way. I’ve had a new lock fitted to it, and I’ll give you a latchkey.”

I pocketed the latchkey, and said that the confidence he showed in me was pleasing. “What I shall do of course will be to let myself in and burgle your workroom. There I shall reap the fruit of your researches, anticipate your discoveries, and subsequently enjoy the fame which you wrongly suppose is coming to you.”

“You couldn’t do it. You are far too much of a duffer at that kind of thing. What you found inside the workroom would be in comprehensible to you. For that reason I won’t trouble you with the workroom at present. Could you be bothered to climb up more stairs in order to see the most absolutely ordinary bedroom that Tottenham Court Road has ever achieved?”

“Certainly not.”

“Well, there is one thing more you must see, just across the passage here.” He opened a door. “This is my kitchen— electric as you observe.”

“And does she cook here?”

“No, idiot. The cooking which is done here I do myself.”

It was easy to believe this. Cooking was one of the things which he took seriously. He was doubtless acquainted with the practice as well as the theory of it.

“Well,” I said, “I confess that I don’t see your game. I suppose you built that place in the garden. You have redecorated these rooms. You have put in electric light and heating, and a telephone. You have filled them up with a lot of fair—to—middling furniture. Now in six months you’ll be sick of this, and will start off on your travels again. Do you suppose you’ll ever see your money back? There is probably nobody on the face of the earth, except yourself, who wants to live over a tobacconist’s shop in Knox Street.”

“No, my practical friend, I don’t suppose I shall see my money back, but I wanted to live here for reasons which I have already given you, and I had to make the place possible; but it is by no means certain that I shall be leaving in six months, and I might quite possibly remain here for the rest of my life. After all, living here is absurdly cheap. It cost me twenty times as much in Paris. Oh yes, I am quite satisfied with what I’ve done, so far as expenditure is concerned. I wish I had nothing else to worry me.”

He seemed quite pleased with the electrical toys in his kitchen, and insisted on showing me how they worked, although I told him that he was talking like a man at an exhibition and becoming very wearisome. Then we went back into the sitting-room, and he rang the bell for tea.

It was Miss Lade who brought the things in and arranged them on a low table by the fire. She did not look once at either of us. Myas stopped her as she was turning to go.

“Do wait and pour out tea for us,” he said.

“I want to present to you a great friend of mine, Mr. Compton.”

She murmured something unintelligible, and seemed a little in doubt whether she should shake hands. I settled the question for her. Her hands did not look as if she did much rough work.

I believe it is said to be the test of a gentleman that he is at ease under all circumstances and in all society. If this be the case, I am emphatically not a gentleman. At this extraordinary tea—party I was not at my ease at all. I did my best, but it was poor. I wanted to talk to Miss Lade—and not only because she was a very pretty girl—and the only mutual ground that I could find on which we might meet was the mulberry trees in the garden. At the time of the Revolution French exiles came to London and there planted mulberry trees, notably in St. John’s Wood, and to a lesser extent in Fulham. So I told her, and I dare say it may be true. I heard with great interest that the mulberries did actually ripen, and I made her promise to send me some of them in due season. She was certainly very shy, but, I should say, appeared considerably less of a fool than I did. She poured out tea very nicely. Myas said little, and did not help a bit.

After a while things went more easily, and I got her to talk about herself. She spoke of a theatre to which Myas had taken her. She told me that at one time she had been very fond of lawn tennis, but that she could not find time for it any longer. She had a very pleasant voice, and great simplicity— two things which I have always especially admired. She was absolutely free from affectation. There was not the slightest attempt to make an impression of any kind. I should think she was with us for about half-an-hour. Then she rose, and said that her mother was going out, and that she would have to attend to the shop. I tried to help her as she was taking away the tea-things, but she would not let me do anything. Myas did not even attempt to do anything. He had sat back in his easy-chair all the time, and watched us through the smoke of his cigarette, as if we were doing an interesting scene in a play for his benefit. It was scandalous behaviour.

“Well?” he said, when she had gone.

“Leave her alone,” I said.

Then he spoke, with a good deal of emphasis, almost with excitement.

“Look here, my dear fellow, you misunderstand this altogether. I don’t blame you for that. You take the ordinary view, and any other man of your blessed pattern would take the same. I’ll go further than that. If you were in my position, I should give you exactly the same advice that you have just given me. But, as it happens, what you say is absolutely beside the point. The things that you imagine are not concerned in the question in the least. I’m not going to make love to that girl. Understand that definitely. I told you over the telephone that I was worried and depressed, and so I am; and that girl is principally concerned in it, but most emphatically not for the reason which you would suppose.”

“I’m no good at mysteries,” I said. “If the trouble is not what I think, I don’t pretend to understand what it is. But I do profess to know something about human nature. Your intentions are excellent, of course. But in a case like this there is often a marked difference between a man’s intentions and his conduct. I will flatter you so far as to tell you that you’re not an ordinary man. Still, you’re a human being.”

“Admitted. I do not profess to have lived the life of an anchorite hitherto. But I am telling you the exact truth when I say that nothing exists now for me but my work, and that this girl troubles me only in so far as she is connected with my work. And if I do as I wish, she will be very intimately connected with it.”

“Oh, very well!” I said. “But there’s another thing to think about. For the last half-hour or so I have been watching that girl in here. If she is not very much in love with you, I’m mistaken, and I know nothing.”

Myas seemed to reflect for a minute. Then he said, with conviction—

“I hope she is. I hope to goodness she is. If she is not, she is not likely to be of much use to me.”

“I give it up. I don’t understand you.”

“No,” said Myas. “But you will one of these days.”

“How?”

“How?” echoed Myas. “Well, you will understand, because either that girl or myself will give you the explanation.”

As I rose to go I pressed him to come and see me some time. He said that he would if he could, but that he was very busy now, and it was a long way to come.

“It is,” I said. “But I should like to point out that the distance from Knox Street to St. James’s Place is exactly the same as the distance from St. James’s Place to Knox Street, which distance I have covered this very afternoon.”

He said that I was a man of leisure, and that time, distance, and taxicabs were all as nothing to me. I was to come again. He generally knocked off work for an hour or two in the afternoon. I had my latchkey.

I left him with the uncomfortable feeling that I had been spending the afternoon with a friend of mine who was by way of being a blackguard. I did not suppose that he was a typical deceiver and seducer, but he did seem to me to be a man absolutely without scruple where his work was concerned. I did not like his business with Vulsame. I did not like the way he was treating Alice Lade. What business had he to make use of her fondness for him for his own purposes? That she was fond of him I had no doubt whatever. She looked at me with candid and friendly eyes, but when her eyes met his they became timorous and perturbed, and the long lashes flickered. The one saving grace of the man was that he was really worried about what he was doing. If he was indeed without scruple, it was with great difficulty that he had brought himself to that point.

About a month later I rang up Myas on the telephone, and suggested that I should come to see him that afternoon. He replied that he was very sorry, but that work which it was impossible to leave would occupy him the whole of that afternoon. He would come to see me.

But he did not come to see me. It was in June that I received from him a rather curious letter, in which he announced his engagement to Alice Lade.

CHAPTER VI

MYAS said in his long letter that the news of his engagement would probably give me a comfortable feeling of superiority, I having always known, of course, what would happen. With this would be mingled certain regret that he had not allied himself more advantageously from the world's point of view. And both feelings, he assured me, would be quite out of place.

"The fact is," he wrote, "that it had become necessary for the purposes of my work for Miss Lade and myself to be frequently together for long periods. Knox Street shook its respectable head, and Mrs. Lade did not like it. The proclamation of an engagement, and the purchase of an absurdly valuable ring, have changed all this. Knox Street smiles upon us, and dreams confetti. Mrs. Lade is quite happy. Briefly, the engagement is simply the price we pay to Knox Street for permission to continue our work as before. So if you have any impression that you ever foresaw anything you should correct it. It is quite probable that we shall never be married, but that depends to some extent on the result of my great experiment.

"Meanwhile, as I require the whole of Miss Lade's time, I have provided a domestic substitute, to Mrs. Lade's considerable, but rather tremulous, satisfaction. For her Knox Street is the voice of society, and almost the voice of God. It is a street filled with people who have kept themselves respectable. Think of all the poignant meaning of that phrase. With insufficient means for the purpose, and with countless temptations to be otherwise, these good people are still respectable. Beside their hard—won respectability, your own, facile and cultured, is no more than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Mrs. Lade is tremulous, because she has advanced one step up the ladder. There is a definite line of demarcation here, between the people who keep a girl and the people who do it all themselves. Mrs. Lade naturally fears lest she should be thought guilty of that quality, which the Greeks called 'hubris' and Fulham calls 'swelled head.' She therefore sighs, and explains to her friends that it was all on account of the lodger, and that she hopes it may be for the best.

"My work has gone on very rapidly, and the day is not far off now. I have little doubt that I shall be able to redeem a promise that I once made you. I wish you would come and see me tomorrow afternoon. It is too bad of you to have neglected me like this."

The man was astounding.

On looking into the matter, I found that I had made two appointments for the following afternoon. I had promised to go with the Hamiltons, who were in town for a few days, to the Queen's Hall, and I had also promised to play bridge with some other people. That made it all quite easy. I excused myself from the bridge-party on the ground that I had forgotten about the Hamiltons, and from the Hamiltons on the ground that I had forgotten about the bridge—party. These two appointments being safely and easily cancelled, I got into a taxicab and drove to Durnford Place.

I let myself in with the latchkey that Myas had given me, and went up the strip of garden. As I passed the workroom, I heard within a chink of glass and a light footstep. I hesitated a moment, thinking that Myas might be there; but I remembered that when he showed me the rest of his establishment, he had

rather made a point of not showing me the workroom. So I went on up the iron staircase, and tapped at the window. Myas himself let me in.

“Come to deliver your congratulations?” He asked, rather sardonically.

“No. I’ve come to ask you to explain yourself.”

“But, my dear fellow, what is there to explain? It all seems to me so simple and natural.”

“What do you mean by saying that it had become necessary for you and Miss Lade to be together for long periods? The thing is absolute nonsense. What possible use can she be to you in your work? She has certainly had no scientific education. She has probably had precious little education of any kind.”

At this moment the door opened, and Miss Lade entered. She addressed herself to Myas, speaking eagerly and quickly: “The variation is three seconds and two-fifths”

As she spoke she saw me. She greeted me cordially enough, and shook hands, but instantly turned back again to Myas.

“Yes,” said Myas, “that’s too much, isn’t it?”

“I thought,” she said, “of trying again with ether alone.”

“Yes,” he said, “you might certainly try that. Do. You’ll be through with it by teatime.”

“I expect so,” she said, and went out of the room again. I think I have never before in my life experienced more completely the sensation that I did not matter in the least. I felt like a small boy who remains quiet and orderly, while his superior papa and mamma discuss questions of finance, or the morals of the parlour-maid, or anything else which is “not for little boys,” in indifferent French.

“Let’s see,” said Myas, “you were beginning to talk about education, weren’t you? Sorry for the interruption. I’ve got views about education.”

“Oh, you’ve got views on everything under the sun. The London season’s telling on your nerves, Compton. You incline to be irritable. I do not think, speaking quite dispassionately, that Alice Lade is exactly what you would have expected from her parentage and position in life.”

“Obviously she’s not. I admit all that.”

“It is true, as you say, that her education was of the very slightest. That was all the better from my point of view. I had no rubbish to clear away. Nothing on earth is quite so easy to understand as what is popularly called Science. The only way that men have been able to make it at all difficult is by inventing a very frantic terminology which they habitually mispronounce, and by carefully suppressing all habit of simple and lucid speech. Education for the child means a march into the unknown. He is told that he has to do quadratic equations, but nobody ever dreams of telling him why. He has to know the name of the capital of Portugal. He has, in extreme cases, to know the names of the kings of Israel and Judah. The patience of the child is remarkable. He really does consent to

lumber up his mind with all this nonsense, merely because papa, or the governess, or the schoolmaster wishes him to do it. It is a wonderful thing that any horse consents to draw any cart, but it is still more wonderful that any child consents to acquire knowledge, on the lines on which knowledge is now generally imparted. When you start on a journey, it is advisable to know where you're going, and you do not journey with much purpose or enthusiasm if you do not know it. One of the very first things I did with Miss Lade was to show her what I was aiming at, and how she could help."

"I see," I said. "You told her that you were aiming at the determination of the Ego, and she understood all that at once. Naturally, she would."

"Don't be an ass! That was, of course, what I told her, but equally, of course, those were not the words which I used. I asked her what she was, why she was here, and what would happen when she died. She told me that she was a girl, that she was here to do her duty, and that she would go to hell if she did not do it. As soon as I began to show her how far from satisfactory these answers were she became interested. These simple elemental things interest everybody, even you. We know of course very little about them at present, and the prospect that she and I would be able to discover more naturally attracted Alice. But I am not taking all the credit for my way of teaching. She is intelligent, plastic, receptive, to a very unusual degree. Many things she seems to acquire unconsciously. For instance, her talk—you noticed it?"

"Yes, I noticed it. The London accent has been eliminated."

"Yes, she now talks just as you do."

"There you are wrong. It is your own accent which she has copied. There is the faintest possible foreign note in it, which has come to you, I suppose, from the fact that you have been speaking French for so long. How did you get her to acquire it?"

"I did not. I have just told you that it was one of the things that she picked up unconsciously. I have never corrected her speech in any way. The fact of the case is that in some respects Alice is singularly childlike. If a child is given a nurse with a Cockney accent, the child will soon talk Cockney. If he has a French *bonne*, he will soon talk French. The influence of the person in authority, with whom the child is on intimate terms, always works, and always unconsciously."

"Well now, my friend, suppose we look at this engagement from Miss Lade's point of view. Does she understand that the whole thing is merely a farce, and that you have no intention of carrying it out?"

"But that is not the case. You must have misunderstood something I said in my letter. I have every intention of carrying it out, if it is possible. But the result of my experiment may make it impossible. It all turns upon that. I don't want to go into the question with you just now, but I admit there is a very grave risk in the experiment."

"And yet she is to take part in it."

“Well, yes. Why not? She wishes it. She is absolutely devoted to me, and for that reason alone she would do it, and by this time she is quite as keen about the work as I am. I own that I felt some reluctance at first. I was worried and depressed about it, as you remember. I still feel that I should be wrong if I put any kind of compulsion upon her—if, for instance, I told her that it was of supreme importance to me that she should take this risk. But I have not done that, and she is a free agent. What she is going to do, she has volunteered to do. And, mind, she runs no risk which I shall not share equally with her. That seems to me to make it all right. Don’t you think so?”

“Of course I don’t. It’s all wrong. It seems to me that what I ought to do is to go down-stairs and have ten minutes’ talk with the poor victim’s mother.”

“You can have ten minutes’ or ten hours’ talk with Mrs. Lade, if you like. It would make no difference. She is not the dominant factor, and Alice is. Of course, the consideration which you are leaving out in your own mind, is really the consideration which best justifies me. There is no advance without sacrifice, and in this case the advance is tremendous, and the sacrifice, if it is needed, is justified. However, the last thing I wish to do is to quarrel with you just now, more particularly as I want to ask a favour of you. I have just made my will.”

“Don’t for goodness’ sake say that you want me to be a trustee. I am trustee for three people already. They all liked me once, but they all hate me now. And they’re all convinced that if I were not a curious combination of knave and fool, I could get them seven per cent. out of trust securities.”

“Well, I do want you to be a trustee. I am leaving everything in trust for Miss Lade. I promise you that she will give you no trouble whatever. You will find her perfectly reasonable and docile.”

After some discussion, I gave way and consented. And then Miss Lade came in again from the workroom.

“Well?” said Myas.

She shook her head. “No use at all. Worse than before.” And then she turned to talk to me.

Certainly, the change in her in a very short time was remarkable. She was self-possessed, and only blushed once—when I congratulated her on her engagement. It was easy to talk to her. Her voice was pleasant and musical, and I thought her perfectly charming.

Myas came down the garden with me when I left. I said to him: “Do you mean to tell me that you’re not in love with her?”

“Undoubtedly I shall be if all goes well. At present there is too much to think about. I haven’t the time for love. Why, I’ve never even kissed her.”

“If I were you, I should go back now and do it. Believe me, it doesn’t take long.”

“It would be absolute ruin,” said Myas.

CHAPTER VII

DURING the next fortnight I saw a good deal of Myas and Miss Lade, and got to know the latter much better. I did not go to Knox Street every afternoon—Myas asked me to do so—but I went very often. One afternoon Miss Lade spoke with some interest of a forthcoming play. This seemed to me to offer an opportunity, and I asked her if she and Myas would dine with me on the first night and come with me to the theatre afterwards.

“I’m afraid I couldn’t,” said Miss Lade. “I have not got any evening dress. But it’s very kind of you.”

“That kind of thing must come later,” said Myas. “When we’ve finished our work we’ll come to you as often as you like.”

“Good,” I said. “I’ll tell the theatre to postpone the production.”

“Don’t get angry with us,” said Myas. “At present, except for an hour or two in the afternoon, we are horribly unsociable. There is a kind of interest in life, that shuts out all other interests. But the end will come soon now, won’t it, Alice?”

“Very soon,” said Miss Lade. She was standing against the window, and the pure beauty of her profile was a delight to one’s eyes. Suddenly she exclaimed with ecstasy: “Carter Paterson! They’ve sent it at last.”

“Good!” exclaimed Myas, and flew down the stairs.

Miss Lade turned to me rather apologetically. “It is some apparatus,” she said. “We have been kept waiting a long time for it. Scientific instrument-makers seem to be the slowest people in the world.”

Myas came panting into the room with a large box in his arms. They did not unpack it completely, but they took out one or two pieces and fitted them together. Miss Lade’s joy over the contents of the box was quite real and unaffected. I doubted if her first evening dress would give her so much pleasure.

The more I saw of Miss Lade, the higher my opinion of her became. She had great abilities, but even so her acquirements and her advance during the last few months seemed to me miraculous. She still kept that almost childlike simplicity which from the first I had appreciated in her. Her devotion to Myas was obviously of the most exalted kind, and her enthusiasm in the work was not less than his own. I could understand now what he meant when he told me that it would be absolute ruin if he began to make love to her. Afterwards, he would in have been unable to continue his work, or to conduct any experiment in which the least risk to her was involved. Nature would have forced its way. Passion was not suppressed, but it was postponed. When the work was done, there would be dinners and evening dresses, and there would be time for love. I got an impression that she understood all this.

One afternoon I returned to St. James's Place on the top of a motor omnibus. On the seat in front of me were two old women with strident voices. They were discussing Mr. Vulsame. "I wouldn't go to him," said one of them, "and I wouldn't call him into my house, not if there wasn't another doctor in England."

"Bit too fond of lifting the elbow, eh?" said the other.

"Yes. That's true enough. But that's not all." She became confidential and dropped her voice. I was not greatly surprised. I knew that Vulsame drank, and my curiosity as to what else he did was not very keen.

It was at the end of this fortnight, in the middle of the London season, and with countless engagements on hand, that I gave the whole thing up and went away. It was a sudden and overmastering impulse, which had occurred to me before, and will probably occur to me again. To my friends and acquaintances I suppose that I seem a normal and cheerful bachelor of forty. That, perhaps, is what I am most of the time. Still, I have been through things of a kind that leave their mark. I was quite a young man when the doctors cut me off from the only profession that I could ever have loved. They stopped polo and hunting as well. For a while I was a good deal of an invalid, and that, I dare say, was a sound enough reason for the girl who threw me over and married a better man. My health is fairly good now, and I do most of the right things at the right time. I enjoy the society of my fellow-men, and I think I can hold my own in any of the sports that my health has left open to me. I am not broken-hearted, and I am not a sentimentalist, but occasionally I get a sudden revulsion against the kind of life that I am leading. Its pleasures become an unmitigated bore. Its absolute uselessness and selfishness disgust me. Then I remember that, but for a whim of fate, I might have been engaged in an active profession, and possibly doing some good in the world. Just at this time too, I recalled the girl who broke her engagement with me. Alice Lade reminded me of her a little. I was not in the least in love with Alice Lade, but yet I regarded Myas with envy. He had at any rate managed to make some woman care very much for him. My mood at such times is not cheerful, and there is no reason why I should ask my friends to put up with it. Besides, I have found that quiet and solitude are the best cure for it. That is why some years ago I bought for half-nothing a little cottage far up on a hill in Gloucestershire, ten miles from the nearest railway station. When I find that solitude and the simplicity of life there no longer please me, my cure is complete. I can go back and mix with my fellow-men again.

I never take my valet down with me to the cottage. An elderly couple have the charge of it, and they can do all that I require. When I am down there I want nothing that reminds me of London. I keep a small car, and have learned to drive it. The distance from shops and the station make it a necessity. I have the fishing rights over three miles of river. If I ever needed it, I could get some golf, but so far I have left it alone. I go down to my cottage to avoid my fellowmen, not to mix with them.

It may have been partly perhaps because I had seen so much lately of the work which Myas was doing, that this fit of disgust of my own life came on me. I got tired of taking so much care of such unimportant things. I got tired of hearing so much worthless talk, and of contributing my share to the sum of it. For an hour or two I was busy with telegrams and telephone, and by that time my man had packed my things and the cab was ready to take me to Paddington. I did not, of course, let my friends know where I had gone. The cottage was my harmless secret. If I let my friends know, they would

probably wish to come down and cheer me up, and that would be too depressing. I said that I was going to Paris.

I took with me two books, or rather pamphlets, which were all that Daniel Myas had so far published. The first of these was entitled *A Clinical Study of the Physical and Psychical Phenomena of Somatic Dissolution*. Myas had often laughed at scientific jargon, but he admitted that he was a master in the use of it himself. This work had appeared originally in the *American Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, and had attracted some little attention. *The Lancet* had dealt dutifully but severely with it. Much of it was simply Greek to me. I was never taught any Science at school, and I did not know what a good deal of the jargon meant. But there were passages in it, notably where he summed up his conclusions in more popular language, which were wildly interesting. The other pamphlet had been privately printed since his arrival in England. It was called *Experimental Observation on the Continuity of the Ego*. I got on better with this. It was a most amazing little pamphlet. It was Science plus Religion, and Religion plus Poetry. As any reader must have gathered, I am not much of an author myself, but I have read a good deal, and I think I do know good writing when I see it. I read that pamphlet more than once, and it increased my respect for Myas's abilities.

I had a week of the most delightful quiet at my cottage. I did a good deal of gardening under the direction of old Welsford. He is rather severe with me, and I think I like it. At any rate, it makes a pleasant change from the catlike obsequiousness of my man in town. Welsford is a great Nature student, too, and tells me and shows me much that is interesting. Everything in the garden has for him a distinct personality, and he speaks of flowers and vegetables very much as he would speak of human beings. I have heard him accuse potatoes of being obstinate.

At about eleven one morning, as I was working in the garden, a telegram was brought out to me which had been forwarded on from St. James's Place. It was signed "Lade," and there was nothing to tell me whether the mother or the daughter had sent it. It said: "Please come here at once."

I hesitated for a moment. I thought of telegraphing for further particulars, but the message seemed so urgent that I decided not to waste time on that. I sent Welsford to get the car out, and hurried indoors to change my clothes. There was an express that I should just be able to catch. I drove myself, and left the car in a garage near the station. Shortly after four I was in London.

I went first to a telephone office to tell my people at St. James's Place to expect me that evening, and then, as I had my latchkey with me, I drove to the entrance in Durnford Place.

My taxicab could not get quite up to the door, as a dogcart was standing there. It was a seedy-looking dogcart, and apparently had not been washed for a week. A wretched old horse stood dejectedly in the shafts. At the horse's head was a groom in dusty and ill-fitting livery. He was eating nuts, and he stared at me curiously, as if he wondered what I was doing there. Durnford Place was very quiet that afternoon, and the crack of the nutshells rang out loudly. I was just about to pay my cabman, when it occurred to me that after all he might perhaps be useful. I told him to wait. At this moment the garden door opened, and Mr. Vulsame came out. He was drawing a pair of excessively ugly yellow gloves on to his fat hands. He had changed if anything for the worse since the night I met him first. His clothes were shabby, and he looked unwashed and unkempt. His expression was grave and troubled.

He spoke to me at once, without offering to shake hands. “So you’ve come at last, Mr. Compton?”

“I came as soon as I got the telegram. It was forwarded to me from London. I was away in Gloucestershire.”

“I see,” he said. “Well, I suppose I had better go in with you.”

“Can you tell me what is the matter, Mr. Vulsame?”

“Matter? I thought you knew. They should have told you in the telegram. Daniel Myas is dead.”

CHAPTER VIII

INSIDE the garden I paused for a moment. "It seems almost incredible," I said. "A few days ago, when I left him, he seemed in the best of health. When did he die?"

"I was telephoned for at a quarter to eight this morning, and was here by eight. So far as I can tell, death must have occurred at least six hours previously."

"And the cause of death?"

"The direct cause was failure of respiration under an anæsthetic. The anæsthetic was chloride of ethyl, and it was automatically administered. It was in his workroom there that he died. I gave notice to the coroner at once, of course. It will be for the inquest to settle whether the death was accidental or not."

I did not much like the man's tone. It was at once truculent and suspicious. "Dr. Myas was about the last man in the world to commit suicide," I said.

"I didn't say suicide. There's a sealed letter waiting for you up at the house. You would probably prefer to open it in the presence of the police, and to show them what it contains."

"Very well," I said. "And what about Miss Lade?"

"I haven't seen her. In fact, she won't see me. Well, I can understand that. She is shut up in her room alone, and I don't for a moment suppose that she will consent to see you either, Mr. Compton."

"I don't want to bother her," I said. "It is all perfectly natural. She was devoted to Myas, and this must be a terrible shock to her."

"Possibly. It may be so. Do you by any chance happen to know the terms of the will?"

"I do. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. Mrs. Lade knew them. I have had that definitely from her own lips. So presumably her daughter knew them too."

"I don't see what bearing that has on the question."

"Don't you?" Sneered Mr. Vulsame. "Perhaps you will see it at the inquest. It is a point which will probably be raised. You seem to be singularly innocent for a man of your years."

I loathed the fellow, and I was getting more and more angry with him. "Wouldn't it save trouble," I said, "if you were to say quite plainly what you mean? Or are you afraid to say it? What is it you are trying to insinuate?"

“I am afraid of nothing, and I am not trying to insinuate anything. Perhaps everything is all right. There is no doubt whatever that Myas made frequent experiments upon himself. He had also experimented with Miss Lade. I found a record of many of the experiments, and I tell you frankly I cannot see for what purpose they were conducted.” He jerked his thumb in the direction of the workroom. “I should say he had every known variety of anæsthetic in there, and some very neat apparatus for administering it. Clockwork can go wrong, and the medical man may make mistakes. That may have been the reason why, when already under the anæsthetic, he received double the amount of the chloride of ethyl that he intended. In that case I suppose the death would be considered accidental. I can’t say. I have an open mind on the question.”

I felt instinctively that this man might do some mischief, and that it would not do to lose one’s temper with him. I decided to handle him a little more carefully. “I was told by Myas,” I said, “that I was to be his sole executor and trustee for Miss Lade. Myas was a great friend of mine. You see I am very deeply interested in this, and I hope you will help me to get to the bottom of it. Could you perhaps spare me an hour or so at St. James’s Place, if you are not too busy?”

“Busy?” he said savagely. “Plucky lot of business Myas left me! Well, he’s dead. I’ll say no more about that just now. Yes, I can come if you like.”

“Thank you very much. Perhaps you would like to send your cart away. I’ve got a taxi there, and I don’t suppose that I shall keep you waiting more than a few minutes.”

“All right,” said Vulsame. “There’s the inspector, if you want him.”

A friendly looking man in plain clothes had just come out of the workroom, locking the door behind him. I introduced myself to him.

“This is a terrible business,” I said. “Have you any idea how it happened?”

“That’s not for me to say, sir,” said the inspector. “Not at present, at any rate. I’m just collecting the facts. So far as I have gone, I have found no motive for suicide, and it is quite possible that the death was accidental. I have been looking at the apparatus in there, and it’s easy to see how a mistake could be made. It’s a clockwork thing, actuating a little pump. You can set it to deliver this anæsthetic stuff once and then stop, or twice and then stop, or any number of times. He was playing a very dangerous game, and there is the evidence in his own writing that he had played it often before. I suppose he was studying the nature of these different anæsthetics. However, something else may turn up yet. Mr. Vulsame will have told you that there is a sealed letter waiting for you.”

“He did.”

“Well, we haven’t been into that yet. Would it be convenient?”

“Quite. If you will come on up to the house, we can open it now.”

We went up the iron steps, and Mrs. Lade’s servant admitted us. She was a young girl—very frightened, stupid, and tearful. Somehow it seemed strange to stand there in Myas’s rooms, and to

know that he would never enter them again. What had become of his proud boast to me that he would demonstrate to me personally the existence of the human soul? The news of his death had been an unexpected shock to me, but I felt the necessity to put personal feelings aside and to keep very keenly on the alert. It was obvious that Mr. Vulsame meant mischief, and I had promised Myas, in the event of his death, to do the best I could for Miss Lade.

The letter contained Myas's will, properly executed, and a short note for myself. The note merely said that Myas was engaged in a line of research which presented certain risks, and that if anything happened to him he wanted to take that opportunity of thanking me for my great kindness to him in the past, and for my promise to look after Alice for the future.

"Had he any near relations?" asked the inspector. "I see he leaves this girl everything."

"No, he had no near relations. He has told me so more than once."

"I see," said the inspector. He made a few notes, including one of my name and address, and then left.

I saw Mrs. Lade for a few minutes. The poor woman was rather incoherent. It was clear that she regarded the presence of any policemen on the premises as a disgrace, and an inquest as a stain on her own personal honour. On these points I did my best to console her. Of Myas she spoke with great enthusiasm.

"A better and a kinder man no one could wish to see, if only he could have been kept from messing with chemicals, as I often told him. And now I must look forward to seeing Alice go the same way, she being of age and with a will of her own."

"How is she?"

"Seems like a person dazed. She is alone in her room, and been there the best part of the day, and perhaps it's as well. But, oh, she's quite strange to me."

"How do you mean, Mrs. Lade?"

"Well, not like my daughter. That's the bitterness of it. It's no fault of hers, mind. It's just this education that's done it. I often think that girls nowadays would be happier without it."

"What did you mean when you said that you must look forward to Alice going the same way?"

"Well, she has told me already that the work must go on, and when she is once determined on a thing there is no moving her. But to my mind it is simply disregarding the warning that God has given us. Of course, she may still think better of it. We can but hope."

It was true, as Vulsame had told me, that she knew the terms of the will, and that Alice was now comparatively a wealthy woman. I will do her the justice to say this did not seem to affect Mrs. Lade in the least, except in so far as it removed the terror of funeral expenses. "By which so many have been crippled," she added feelingly. "The money will be little good to Alice," she said, "for she will

never marry now. There never was but one man in the world for her, and that was Dr. Myas.” I was entirely of her opinion.

I left word with her that Miss Lade could see me at any time. She had only to send a telephone message, and I would come at once. I now went back to Vulsame. I found him seated in my taxicab, and smoking one of the very worst cigars I have ever had the misfortune to smell.

“You’ve kept me waiting a hell of a time,” he said angrily.

“Sorry,” I said. I persuaded him not to talk to me in the cab, on the grounds that the traffic made it difficult for one to hear, and while he remained silent I could think over the situation and make my plans. I studied his physiognomy very carefully. It struck me that, if necessary, Mr. Vulsame would probably be purchasable at a moderate figure, provided of course that he was allowed to save his face.

At St. James’s Place he watched me as I paid the cabman. “My word!” he said. “You toffs don’t think much about keeping them waiting, ticking up twopences all the time. But it runs up, doesn’t it?”

“Yes,” I said, “it runs up.”

“But I suppose,” he added tactfully, “you take that out of the estate.”

He accepted with alacrity the offer of a whisky-and-soda. “I don’t mind admitting,” he said, “that I’m simply parched. A thing like this knocks one over a bit too, though of course I’m a doctor and used to it. I can tell you, it wasn’t a very pretty sight when I went into that laboratory early this morning.”

I had the whisky left by Mr. Vulsame for purposes of reference. The more talkative he was, the better he would suit my purpose. I told him that I should be glad to have his opinion on some cigars of mine. I struck a match and handed it to him. In fact, I waited on the beast. For a moment or two he jabbered nonsense about the cigars, and then I struck in.

“There was one thing you told me this morning, Mr. Vulsame, that surprises me very much.”

“Ah,” said Mr. Vulsame complacently, “I dare say. I’ve surprised a good many people in my time. What was it?”

“Well, I don’t see how poor Myas can possibly have interfered with your practice. I should have thought that was quite secure. Myas always spoke of you as an able man; for that matter, I could see as much for myself. If I may say so, I am sure your genial manners would make you popular in Fulham or anywhere else. I was sorry as well as surprised to hear that business was not very good with you.”

“The competition is pretty keen everywhere,” he said. “It doesn’t take so very much to put a man wrong. What I have told you is quite correct, and my books will show it. If you doubt my word you can see them.”

“But, my dear fellow, why on earth should I doubt your word?”

“Very well, then. I suppose you know the lines Myas was working on. I did permit him to make certain observations and carry out certain experiments with patients of mine. It was all quite legitimate, mind you, or I wouldn’t have allowed it. Not for a moment. But it got talked about, and, of course, it got exaggerated, and it did me a deal of harm.”

“By the way, do give yourself another drink, Mr. Vulsame. And it is solely to this that you assign the falling off in your practice?”

“Solely. I’m as good as ever I was. Better.” He took the other drink.

“Well,” I said, “this, of course, is a thing which ought to be looked into. If it’s not too delicate a question, did Dr. Myas make you any payment for these important services that you seem to have rendered him?”

“If you can call it payment.”

“Oh, I didn’t want to know the exact amount. That, of course, I shall get later, because, as his executor, I shall have his bankbook in my hands.” I wished to spare Mr. Vulsame the humiliation of telling lies which would afterwards be discovered.

“Quite so,” said Mr. Vulsame. “I knew that. Well, as a matter of fact, he did pay me what was agreed upon between us, before I knew what the result would be. It is the result that makes all the difference. What we’ve got to look at is the injury to the capital value of my practice. You understand what I mean by capital value? Quite so, I thought you would. If he had left me in his will a matter of two hundred—or, say, three hundred—pounds, I should never have said a word about this to anybody. But I understand that I’m not so much as mentioned.”

“You are not. And you consider that you have really a moral claim against his estate.”

“Moral claim. You’ve hit the phrase exactly.”

“Then, of course, it becomes my duty to consider this. I must turn it over in my mind, and see what ought to be done. Naturally, you wouldn’t expect a decision offhand.”

“Not at all. I’m a reasonable man. Your time is mine.” And he took another drink.

“There’s one other point,” I said. “What is your real opinion about the death of Myas?”

“Between ourselves?”

“Quite.”

“The thing’s as clear as mud. It was murder. And either the old woman or Miss Lade did it, though almost certainly it was Miss Lade.”

“This,” I said, “is very interesting.”

I was pretty certain that it was not a case of murder. I was absolutely certain that, if it was murder, neither Mrs. Lade nor her daughter had anything to do with it. But I did not want any suspicion of Miss Lade to be stated publicly. These things cling to one and do harm, even when the suspicions are shown to be baseless. There is always some idiot who has read half the newspaper report of a sixteenth of the evidence, and thinks himself justified in expressing his wonder afterwards whether there was anything in it. There are some offences, of which the mere accusation is enough to produce something like ruin. My interview with Mr. Vulsame began to be, as I had frankly told him, very interesting.

CHAPTER IX

MR. VULSAME waved a soiled and impressive hand at me. "Now, Mr. Compton," he said, "I'm going to tell you. I'm going to put all my cards on the table."

"That's very good of you."

"I dare say you thought me a little short in my manner with you up at Knox Street just now. I have been a good deal worried of late, and worry—especially financial worry—gets on one's nerves. No offence was intended."

I murmured something consolatory. "As a matter of fact," Mr. Vulsame continued, "I have very great confidence in you, Mr. Compton, and I'm going to be quite candid with you. I think you had a high opinion of this Miss Lade, and from something poor Myas once let drop, that was what I gathered."

"Quite correct." "So naturally, you are not inclined to believe in her guilt. Still, one must do one's duty. One has got to face the facts."

"Undoubtedly. And the facts?"

"Some of them are known already. One of them—the most serious of all—is at present known only to me. I didn't mention it to the inspector, or to anybody else. I'm going to mention it now. Let us see what happened. Mrs. Lade, her daughter and her servant, all went up to their respective bedrooms at a few minutes past ten last night. They are agreed upon that. They left Myas at work in his laboratory in the garden as usual. He often worked very late. It is said that they did not leave their rooms until the following morning. The servant, who rose at six, discovered that Myas had not been in his bedroom all night, and then called up Mrs. Lade and her daughter. Now, as it happens, I have got a latchkey to the garden entrance in Durnford Place. Myas gave it me at a time when I was seeing him frequently, and often had to fetch him away to cases of mine—sometimes after the rest of the household were in bed. For the last three weeks I have seen much less of him. He told me that he had completed his observations, and that he did not think I could be of any further service to him. When I met him casually in the street, he was rather inclined to snub me. And that's not a thing I take from anybody. Last night, soon after twelve, I was coming back home. I'd been spending the evening with a few friends in a convivial sort of way. That is a most unusual thing with me. Doctors have to be temperate men. But the fact of the case is that I had been a good deal bothered by a patient of mine—a woman. She jabbered about malpractice and neglect, and threatened an action. There was nothing whatever in it. I shall have her signed up and planked into an asylum in a week. But it was a disturbing thing, and when some of my friends thought that I wanted cheering up, I didn't say no. Well, let's see what I'm talking about."

"You were coming back after being cheered up."

"Exactly. I took Durnford Place on my way. It occurred to me that I might as well go and look up Myas, and have some explanation with him. I wanted to talk to him about the way my practice was

going down-hill. He was a generous man, and I felt quite sure he'd be prepared to meet me. I don't mind owning that I wanted another drink too. And it doesn't do for a man in my position to be seen passing into a 'pub' just before closing time. People might think I'd been called in professionally, or they might not. See?"

"Naturally, Mr. Vulsame. You showed your customary good judgment."

"As soon as I let myself into the garden, I saw that the laboratory was brightly lit up. Funnily enough, Myas had never shown me his laboratory, though I had dropped a hint or two about it. He was secretive about his work. I don't know to this day what it was that his particular line of research' was aiming at. That garden—path, as you may have noticed, is all grown over with grass and moss. Your footsteps make no sound upon it. I got close up to the window, which was partly open, and was on the point of calling to him, when I heard within the studio two voices. I could not catch what was said; but one was the voice of Myas, and one was the voice of a woman. What would any gentleman do under those circumstances?"

"Go away and hold his tongue." "That," said Vulsame, with conscious pride, "is exactly what I did. I put myself in his place. I asked myself how I should like it if I were sitting in there with a girl, all cosy and comfortable, and somebody came and interfered, or dropped hints about it afterwards. However, we needn't go into that. I suppose you see the point. If Miss Lade says that she went to her bedroom shortly after ten last night, and did not leave it till somewhere about seven this morning, Miss Lade lies."

"You are sure it was her voice?"

"Pretty sure." "Do you think it enough to be pretty sure?"

"Well, there is what might be called corroborative evidence. What had Miss Lade to gain by the death of Myas? Absolutely everything—he had left her every penny he possessed, and she knew it. What had any other woman to gain by his death? Nothing. It can have been no other woman than Miss Lade, though I dare say her old mother is mixed up in it as well. We will go on a little further. This morning I am called in and find Myas dead from an anæsthetic automatically administered. Now no medical man in his senses would dream of giving himself an anæsthetic in this way without having somebody present qualified to watch him, and to do anything that might be necessary. Miss Lade had been working as his assistant for some time, and was fully competent. I have definite proof in his own handwriting that on another occasion he had placed himself under an anæsthetic with Miss Lade in attendance. This time, either she deliberately altered the regulator of that mechanical pump, or she saw that things were going wrong and did nothing. Murder in either case."

"Well now, Mr. Vulsame, I'll give you my point of view. I know that Miss Lade did not murder Myas. I know it definitely. I have seen them together frequently, and I cannot be mistaken. Miss Lade's devotion to that dead man was a very real and a very beautiful thing. She would have given her life for him cheerfully. If your evidence before the coroner is on the lines that you have just shown me, that is some of the evidence with which I shall meet it. You see, my friend, that it is of no use for you to say that no medical man would dream of administering an anæsthetic to himself unless there was some competent person with him. It is no use to say it, because that automatic pump proves you

wrong. If Miss Lade were present and if she were competent to watch the process of anæsthesia, she was also competent to give the anæsthetic, and there was no necessity whatever for any mechanical apparatus. Myas had made many experiments upon himself with anæsthetics. You have told me there is a record of them. Probably he had found out exactly what he thought he could do within the limits of safety. He may have been exceptional in taking the risk, but the apparatus proves that he took it. You say that Miss Lade lied, and I fully agree with you. It was natural that any woman should lie under those circumstances. If she was with him alone in that laboratory so late at night, after the rest of the household had gone to bed, and this became generally known, her character would suffer for it—though in this respect as in the other I believe her to be entirely innocent.”

“Put like that, it does of course look different,” said Vulsame.

“Quite so. Now you and I are reasonable men, and can talk this over. You did not find me unreasonable when you spoke, for instance, of your moral claim against Myas’s estate. I am somewhat more than the trustee for Miss Lade. I was asked by Myas to look after her. I give you my word of honour that I’m absolutely convinced of her innocence. If you mention before the coroner that Miss Lade was, or may have been, alone in the laboratory with Myas after twelve last night, I have no doubt that she will have an explanation to give. That explanation would go along with my evidence, which I tell you frankly would be dead against you. But though this preposterous charge of murder will be shown to have nothing in it, in the eyes of the pious and evil-thinking people of Knox Street Miss Lade’s reputation will be gone. I do not think it necessary for you to tell the coroner anything whatever about your visit to the laboratory last night. Remember, I was more the friend of Myas than I was of Miss Lade, and I wouldn’t say this if I believed there had been the barest possibility of foul play. The reasonable thing and the chivalrous thing for you to do is to say nothing whatever about this incident. And if you are reasonable, you will also find me reasonable.”

“In what particular way do you mean?”

He shot one quick glance at me from his small and furtive eyes, and I saw that he understood exactly. I had to put the thing plainly enough, but not too plainly. I trust that I appeared to be more at my ease than was really the case.

“Reasonable in every way, I hope. To take one instance—the first that happens to occur to my mind—there is your moral claim against the estate of which I am trustee. You know, of course, that a moral claim is not a legal claim. I cannot pay you one penny out of the estate; if I had the best will in the world to do it, the law does not permit me to do it. This does not mean that I do not recognize the force of your moral claim. I am quite sure that Myas never wished you to be a loser by any transactions which you had with him.”

“That’s absolutely certain. If I had done what I intended to do last night, and what I was prevented by the natural delicacy of a gentleman from doing, I shouldn’t be talking to you like this. As things stand, I am sacrificed to my feelings of chivalry.”

“Well, now, Mr. Vulsame, the consideration of what Myas would have wished has great weight with me. If I wrote you a cheque on my account for, say, three hundred pounds—I think those were the figures—it would not inconvenience me in any way, and it would indeed give me a great pleasure to

do this small thing for my dead friend. Naturally, I should not wish to act less chivalrously than yourself.”

“If that is the way you look at it, I’m agreed—perfectly agreed. Why not? The reputation of the girl and the memory of the dead man both gain from the transaction. But if you put it to me that I’m to take three hundred pounds to hold my jaw—”

“My dear fellow, my dear Mr. Vulsame, please make no such preposterous suggestion as that. Do you think I’m not aware that I’m dealing with a gentleman? No, you may be assured that the arrangement between us will never be represented in that light. It is a matter purely between ourselves, and concerns nobody else. You will come to me after the inquest, and we will complete the matter, and not another word will be said about it.”

“Very good. These cigars are first-class. I’ll just take another and one last little drink, with your permission, and then I must be off. But I tell you candidly—there are some queer things about this case, and they beat me entirely.”

“You are quite right. There are several things in it which I cannot understand in the least. What were you referring to particularly?”

“Well, I’ll tell you one thing. In a corner of that workroom this morning there was a whole lot of apparatus. What it was I can’t say, but it was a big elaborate thing, and must have cost a pot of money. I should imagine it was electrical. Now that was all smashed to bits, just as if it had been broken up with a hammer. What’s more, I found a hammer there that might have done it.”

“Yes, it’s strange. But I can’t see that such a thing should have any bearing on the death of Myas. For all we know, Myas himself may have smashed the thing. He had a nasty temper when his work disappointed him, and he was never very patient with anything ineffective. By the way, before you go you might give me your latchkey to the garden in Durnford Place. I am returning my own key to Miss Lade, and I’ll send yours with it.”

“Myas gave it me—he didn’t lend it me. Still, I don’t want to make a fuss about it. Anything that you say is right is good enough for me. Besides, the damned thing is no use to me anyway. Here you are, Mr. Compton.”

He laid the key down on the table. It appeared that he had his cigar-case with him, and was willing to pay me the great compliment of filling it with my cigars at my suggestion. He had not, however, brought his purse with him, and borrowed a couple of sovereigns for what he described as incidental current expenses. He then, to my great joy, drew on his absurd gloves, picked up his hat, and demanded a taxicab.

When he had gone, I reflected at length on my own position. I knew Miss Lade to be innocent. I knew definitely that she had not murdered Myas. I knew that if she was in the laboratory after twelve the night before, it was merely on account of the work that Myas was doing, and that she had made the visit secretly for obvious reasons—to prevent servants or Vulsame from misunderstanding her. This being so, it seemed to me the thing to do was to save her as far as possible even from the shadow of

suspicion.

But one fact remained—I was about to pay a man three hundred pounds to suppress evidence at an inquest, and I did not quite like the thought of that when I went round to see my solicitor at his private house that night. I liked it so little that I did not say a word to him about it. Otherwise, it would have interested me to have asked him how many years' penal servitude I was likely to get if I was found out. Certainly, for a respectable, law-abiding, middle-aged gentleman I had gone rather far. But I thought the circumstances justified me.

CHAPTER X

THE coroner's jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death, and there was little or no suggestion during the inquest that any other verdict was possible. Mr. Vulsame was quite at his best. He had a frock-coat and his professional manner. He was omniscient, but he was also sympathetic. He spoke of Myas as a singularly gifted man, who had at one time come to him for advice. Myas, so he told us, was interested in medical psychology, and made many experiments upon himself; he (Vulsame) had given him a warning on this point on a previous occasion. In fact, Vulsame was very impressive and magnificent. Possibly with a view to earning his money, he mentioned that Myas was very happily engaged, and that Miss Lade's devotion to him was a real and very beautiful thing. The echo of my own words made me squirm.

I had not seen Miss Lade before the inquest. She was dressed entirely in black, of course, and kept her veil down. She spoke in a low voice, and seemed perfectly self—possessed. There was even a vague suggestion of dominance and decision about her which I had not noticed before. She was not required to say much. If Vulsame's story of the two voices in the laboratory was a true story—and certainly I believed it—then Miss Lade lied, and she lied simply, firmly and well.

My own evidence was merely to the effect that Myas had no financial trouble, and no other cause so far as I knew for taking his life. I confirmed Vulsame's opinion of the happiness of his engagement, and I mentioned that to my knowledge Myas had been anticipating a considerable success in his line of scientific research.

The coroner had a few wise words to say on the distinction between eccentricity and insanity. The jury might reasonably come to the conclusion that Myas was slightly eccentric, but they could not go further than that. Many medical men, he reminded them, had tried experiments upon themselves. Mr. Vulsame, who had given his evidence admirably, had told them that he himself had found a record of similar experiments in Myas's handwriting, and had given him a very proper and judicious warning against them.

Altogether it was a great day for Vulsame. As we left the court, I handed him an envelope, and he thanked me. "Pulled it off all right, eh?"

"I think you gave your evidence admin ably, Mr. Vulsame."

He tapped the breast-pocket in which he had placed the envelope. "Not a word about this to anybody, you know."

"Much better not," I agreed. "It could be so easily misunderstood."

The envelope contained three hundred pounds in Bank of England notes. I had not thought it advisable to pay by cheque. I had even taken the trouble to get the notes from four different sources. In fact, I was not prepared to trust Vulsame quite so far as I could throw him.

In accordance with the directions contained in his will, the body of Daniel Myas was cremated and no religious service was held over it, and I was the only person present. Mr. Vulsame had expressed an intention of being there, but was prevented by a professional engagement. I think it was Miss Lade who was responsible for the absence of herself and her mother. Old Mrs. Lade spoke to me about it and seemed to regret it. She had the deep interest in funerals which is characteristic of her class. "But we mothers have to do what we're told nowadays," she said. She also expressed a hope that friends in Knox Street would not think the funeral arrangements shabby. She admitted that Myas's directions for simplicity and his prohibition of floral tributes had to be observed.

That year, for the first time in my life, I spent August and September in town. I was engaged in clearing up all the business of Myas's estate. Fortunately, it proved to be a very simple matter; Myas had always been in the habit of consulting a solicitor as to his investments, and very few of them had to be changed.

I called at Knox Street on the day after the funeral, but Miss Lade was not to be seen. I did see her once in the following week, for a few moments only, at her solicitor's office, on matters of business connected with the estate. And I noticed then that her manner to me had changed completely. She said as little as possible, and she got away as soon as possible. She told me nothing as to her future plans. She asked for no advice. I noticed further that she avoided meeting my eye directly.

I met her again by chance, and rather curiously. I had received a letter from old Welsford. I was meaning to run down to my cottage for a week-end, and there were certain things which Welsford desired me to bring with me. He wanted a rain—gauge of a particular kind, and his letter reminded me that I had promised him his blessed rain-gauge. He also described the garden thermometer as being now "past work," and suggested that it should be replaced. That was how I came to visit the shop of Denville & Moore, the instrument makers in Holborn.

In the shop was Alice Lade, talking freely and even urgently to a managerial and dignified person on the other side of the counter. She had her back to me and did not see me. As I waited for an assistant at the other counter, I could hear what was said. People do not tell their secrets in the shops of the scientific instrument makers, and I felt no scruples about it.

"You must have got Dr. Myas's original specifications," said Miss Lade.

"We have, madam," said the man. "We always keep everything of that kind. Our difficulty is that while this piece of apparatus was being constructed, Dr. Myas modified those specifications and in some cases departed from them altogether. It was a very delicate piece of work indeed, and very complicated. We could construct the apparatus again according to the original specification, but we feel sure it would not give you satisfaction. He supervised every detail of the construction himself."

"That's all right," said Miss Lade. "I can understand that. Then let me see the workman to whom he gave his verbal instructions. Only an intelligent man could be employed for work of that kind, and he would be certain to remember any instance in which the specification was not followed."

"Probably he would. But there we are brought face to face with another difficulty. Dr. Myas's orders were given to our foreman. He was a very able and well—educated man, but unfortunately he was

intemperate, and for that reason we had to get rid of him. We cannot say now where he is.”

At this moment my assistant produced rain-gauges, and my attention was for the moment diverted. But as he was packing up my purchases, I again heard Miss Lade

“That’s what you must do, then. You must advertise for this man. At any cost I must have this apparatus reconstructed.”

And then she turned and saw me.

She seemed startled and embarrassed, but what struck me most was that she looked very ill. She shook hands with me in a perfunctory sort of way, murmured a silly word or two about the weather, said good-morning, and turned to go.

But almost immediately she turned back again. Her eyes beckoned me, and I followed her out to the cab which was waiting for her.

“Get in, please,” she said.

As she spoke, I looked at her, and saw that her face was contorted with pain. She seemed suddenly to have grown many years older. I followed her into the cab. The driver apparently already had his directions. Alice Lade sat with her elbows on her knees and her hands covering her face. Then suddenly she touched my arm.

“Can you get me some brandy?” she said. . “I have a kind of neuralgia that gives me such intense pain, that I’m afraid of fainting.”

By the direction of my doctor I always carry with me a tiny flask of brandy, though for the last two years I am thankful to say I have never wanted it. It was useful in this emergency.

She drank eagerly. Her colour returned slightly, and her face became more tranquil.

“Thank you very much,” she said. “If you will stop the cab, I won’t keep you any longer. I have to go on to some chemists in the City that are doing some work for me.”

I was angry, of course, but I trust that I only appeared firm.

“You are not lit to go on to the City, or to do any further business this morning, Miss Lade. If you insist upon it, I shall certainly come with you. If you will promise me to go straight home, I will leave you. You will probably think me very officious and interfering, but you must remember that I promised to look after you.” “I don’t think you officious or interfering. I am really grateful to you. It is only that just at present I cannot bear to have any one at all with me. I must be alone. But I will do as you say, and will go home at once.”

I stopped the cab and got out without shaking hands. As I stood with the door open, I said: “To Durnford Place or Knox Street?”

“To Durnford Place, please. Thank you again. One day perhaps “She did not finish her sentence, and once more covered her face with her hands. I waited a second or two, and then closed the door and gave the driver his order.

I had a good deal to think of, as I sat alone after lunch that day. Try how I would to prevent it, Vulsame’s suspicions of Alice Lade would come back to my mind. I told myself that these suspicions were unworthy of me. Miss Lade had seemed somewhat ungrateful; she had snubbed me and discarded me for no reason of which I was aware. Neither of those things should have made me suspicious, and I have always considered it rather low class to be wounded and resentful. But it was in vain that I tried to bully myself into a better frame of mind. The horrible and astounding fact was this— if Miss Lade had really been responsible for the death of Daniel Myas, I should have expected her to behave very much as she had behaved. She looked to me like a woman tortured with remorse and sleepless nights.

CHAPTER XI

NATURALLY, Myas was a good deal in my mind during these months. Again and again I recalled his definite and boastful promise that before the year was out he would demonstrate to me the existence of a human soul, of which mind and body were but the concomitants. Great had been his enthusiasm. Everything had been made to give way to his work. He had risked both life and love for it. He had looked forward with the utmost confidence to the day of his experiment. He had told me that it would revolutionize thought—that it would make a new heaven and a new earth. Had the experiment succeeded, his claim would perhaps have been justified. And now all the years of work, all the ambition and ability, had ended in a little heap of dust in an oak casket. And things went on as before. I still insisted upon believing in Miss Lade's innocence; and if she were indeed innocent, then it seemed bitter that so much should have been wrecked by so little—by a flaw in a piece of mechanism, or by one careless moment in Myas himself.

One or two obituary notices had appeared. That in the *Lancet* was brief, but peculiarly admirable. Without taking back one word that had been said about Myas's pamphlet, it still found much to praise in him, and its expression of regret that he had not lived to complete his researches, seemed both decent and genuine. It has occasionally been my lot to read obituary notices of those whom I have known personally, and I have read them always with a kind of surprise. I have never recognized in them the men that I knew. This may be because it is the important part of them which figures in the obituary, and the characteristic trifles which one has grown to like or dislike are omitted. Certainly no one could have reconstructed Daniel Myas from his obituary notice. His work was there, but the man himself was not. After all, it would have been difficult to give a picture of him; the strange blend of serious strength and amusing weaknesses is common enough and human enough; but it is difficult to make it seem real.

There was much that was rather morbid in this business of Myas and Alice Lade, and I was not sorry when, early in October, another subject occurred to occupy my mind. An old friend of mine, coming rather late in life into possession of the family archives, chanced upon a manuscript diary relating in part to the Peninsular War. The rather absurd idea occurred to him that I was just the man to edit it for publication, and I'm afraid I was too vain to put the idea aside at once. I said that I would at any rate read this diary. I did read it, and I found it extremely interesting. It was filled, however, with things which I did not understand, and allusions which I could not follow. I thought I had just an average knowledge of eighteenth—century history, but average knowledge was of very little use here. I was driven to the British Museum and to other libraries. I think I may say that I consider the joy of clearing up a difficult point in an old personal history to be one of the purest and noblest that I have known.

One sunny day, more like midsummer than October, I had spent the whole morning in the British Museum, and afterwards had lunched at the club. I had been rather successful that morning and had several excellent notes to add to my edition of that diary, if ever I undertook it. I went back to St. James's Place immediately after luncheon, in order to get to work again.

I let myself into the flat with my latchkey, and found on the table in the hall a registered letter in a foolscap envelope. It was addressed to me in a handwriting which, if I had not known him to be dead, I could have sworn to as the handwriting of Daniel Myas.

One obvious explanation occurred to me. It might actually be his writing; it might be some letter which he had left in the care of Alice Lade with instructions to forward it to me at this interval after his death.

I was on the point of opening it, when my man came out and told me that a person giving the name of Mrs. Lade had called to see me.

“Is she here now?” I asked.

“Well, yes, sir. She said that she knew you very well, and seemed so insistent that I allowed her to wait. Will you see her, sir, or shall I send her away?”

“I’ll see her. Show her into my study.” I put the letter down on the table in my study with the address downwards. Mrs. Lade would also have recognized the handwriting, and would probably have found it very upsetting. She was easily upset.

She was well-dressed in deep mourning, and seemed rather embarrassed by her clothes and by the situation in which she now found herself. As she struggled towards speech, I told her I was sorry I had been out when she called, and that she had had to wait.

“That did not matter in the least, sir. I had expected to wait. I have been made quite comfortable and had the *Times* newspaper.”

“What’s more to the point,” I said, “is, have you had any lunch?”

“Oh yes, sir,” she said. “Yes, Mr. Compton, I’ve lunched.”

Here, suddenly and without warning, Mrs. Lade burst into tears. I dislike tears. I have the feeling, which is perhaps rather selfish, that people should not weep when I am present. However, I tried to be sympathetic and to find out what was the matter.

The flood-gates of her speech were now wide open. But some little time elapsed before I could rescue anything like a coherent story out of the torrent. She repeated over and over again that nothing had been the same since the death of Daniel Myas. She asked tragically what daughters were for. She said that she had always been respectable, as anybody in Knox Street would tell me. Friends in Knox Street had been kind to her under trying circumstances. She informed me that she was not a good sailor, far from it. She gave me, with more minuteness than delicacy, the details of the disease of which poor Willy’s wife died, long before I found out that Willy was her brother in New York.

Gradually and patiently I drew out all the facts and pieced them together. The thing which was affecting Mrs. Lade most was the change which had taken place in her daughter. In the matter of money Alice was apparently generous. “I can buy what I like and go where I like. Cabs I take

frequently. If it wasn't for this sacred time of mourning I might be sitting in the theatre every evening in the week. And I should enjoy it too. For it takes you out of yourself."

But it appeared that Alice showed her mother very little affection, and was seldom with her. During the greater part of her time she was shut up in the workroom in which Myas died. She refused to see any of her friends in Knox Street, and Mrs. Lade was tired of making one excuse after another to them. She spoke very little to anybody. And, although she caught cold, sitting late in that laboratory, and although it had affected her voice, she had refused to allow her mother to nurse her at all. "Different altogether, she is," sobbed Mrs. Lade. "And ammoniated quinine she simply refuses to look at."

At this juncture a letter had arrived from Mrs. Lade's widowed brother in New York. He had a house and children, and he needed some one to look after them. His experiences with paid housekeepers had not been encouraging. Some of them, he said, were sniffy and superior and incompetent, some of them drank, and some of them desired him to marry them. He appealed to Mrs. Lade and her daughter to come over and live with him. Mrs. Lade showed me this letter, and I was rather surprised that it could have been written by her brother. In spite of the fact that she was a bad sailor, the idea had appealed to Mrs. Lade. She had relinquished her shop now, because there was no necessity to keep it on. I should imagine the income derived from it had never been very attractive. At the same time, Mrs. Lade was a woman who liked to have an occupation. "Added to which," she said, "they tell me America's a nice place." She had put the matter before her daughter, and her daughter's decision had grievously distressed her. Mrs. Lade was certainly to go to live with her brother. It was her duty. All the money that was wanted for her outfit and passage would be forthcoming, and on her arrival in New York she would receive a sufficient income to provide for her in comfort and independence. Thus, if she and the widowed Willy did not happen to hit it off together, she would be free to employ her activities elsewhere. Alice had urged almost ordered—her to go. But at the same time Alice definitely refused to accompany her. She said that she was continuing the work which she had begun with Daniel Myas, and that this made it impossible for her to leave England. Tears and persuasions had seemed to have no effect on her.

I tried to get Mrs. Lade to see the thing from another point of view. Alice's resolve to continue that work was really a kind of loyalty to the dead man. But Mrs. Lade was not to be convinced.

"If she would promise to come out a year after me, or even two years, I could be satisfied. It's the separation for ever that is hard for me to face. But when I speak to her about it, she gives that quick little wave of the hand, same as the poor doctor always did when you annoyed him about anything; and I don't know that I've told you the worst yet."

The worst proved to be that for three days Mrs. Lade had not even seen her daughter. "Do you know where she has gone?" I asked.

"Gone? She's not gone. She's still there. She has the rooms that were his now, and her time is spent between them and the workshop, and most of it in the workshop. Do you know, Mr. Compton, that I've had doors locked against me in my own house? Do you know that she doesn't even take her meals with anything like regularity? A few words scrawled on a scrap of paper—that's all I've had from her these last three days. I'll tell you what I think about it."

“Well?” I asked.

Mrs. Lade tapped her forehead significantly. “That, to the best of my belief, is what is the matter with her. There has been no history of it in my family, but, as Mrs. Porter was saying to me in Knox Street only this morning, grief may overturn the mind. If I had had any feeling of confidence in that Vulsame, I should have called him in, expense being no longer a consideration. But there, what use would it have been if I had? It’s twenty to one she would have refused to see him.”

I thought this extremely likely. The conduct of Alice was becoming more and more inexplicable to me. However, the absurdity of Vulsame’s suspicions seemed to be demonstrated by it, and I was rather ashamed that the same suspicions had occurred to my own mind. A woman who had murdered Myas would not care to shut herself up in the rooms which he had occupied, and in the laboratory where he had died. Alice Lade had always had a simple natural affection for her mother; this had apparently vanished. The desire for solitude was remarkable. There were points in her behaviour when I met her at the instrument makers’, which had seemed to me curious. I knew, too, how great her devotion to Myas had been. It was quite possible that, as a result of his death, her mind had given way.

I sympathized with the poor old woman, and did the best I could to console her. I promised that I would myself go and see Alice. I would talk things over with her, and, if I found that she was ill, I thought I could use my authority sufficiently to persuade her to see a doctor. I think that when old Mrs. Lade left me, she was much comforted by what I had said. In my own mind I felt far from sure that Alice would see me, and wondered what my next move ought to be in that case.

When my visitor had gone, I picked up that letter from the table and tore open one end of it. Something fell from it with a metallic little tinkle, and I picked it up. It was the latchkey to the garden entrance in Durnford Place.

CHAPTER XII

THE letter which accompanied the latchkey covered several pages of foolscap, and was written entirely in the characteristic handwriting of Daniel Myas. It seemed to have been written freely and firmly, and gave not the slightest suggestion of a laboured imitation of his writing. The sheets were fastened together by a staple placed, as he always placed it, in the middle of the top of the page—not in the corner, which is a more usual custom. My eye fell on the date under the address, and I was astounded. It was the same date as the postmark. I will give the letter in full

“DEAR COMPTON,

“It is not a coincidence, a chance similarity; it is I, Daniel Myas, who write this, though the hand that holds the pen is the hand of Alice Lade. And I shall redeem my promise to you—to prove by demonstration that the Ego, the soul, the self, exists independently of mind and body, though it is only by mind and body that it becomes cognizable by man under his present conditions.

“I had hoped to redeem that promise differently and more fully. I assure you I write now with no pride in what I have done, but even with an intense horror of it. I have reached the end to which I devoted so many years of labour, and I would gladly give all that I possess—yes, and life itself—if it could be undone again. I do not write to you to boast of any achievement. I write to ask your help.

“Do you understand? I am supposed to be Alice Lade. I am possessed of her mind and her body, but with some modifications that have already taken place, and with others, I think, imminent. I am not Alice Lade and I am Daniel Myas. Yes, I know it is incredible, and I know what facile explanation will leap to your mind at once. But that explanation of madness plus a considerable gift for forgery is wrong. I am Daniel Myas. I want your help. I want you to come to the laboratory in the garden. If you do that—if you see my face and hear my voice—you will need no other evidence. You will know that I am Daniel Myas.”

At this moment the door opened. I was absorbed in what I was reading, and the opening of the door made me start up, but it was merely my servant.

“The gentleman who was with you here, sir, some months ago, Mr. Vulsame, has called, and wishes to see you particularly.”

The man hesitated. “Well?” I said.

“He is not sober, sir,”

“Very well. I’m not at home. He is not to wait.”

“Very good, sir.”

I picked up again the pages in the handwriting of Daniel Myas, and I read on—

“I have to tell you what happened on the night when my soul, the soul of Daniel Myas, became cognizable only through the mind and body of Alice Lade. I will tell it as clearly as I can. But you must make allowances for me. You saw what I was like at that shop in Holborn, and you can believe that I am rarely free from actual physical pain. For months too I have lived in an agony of fear and remorse, working without hope of success, and with the fixed intention to commit suicide if I failed. It was only a few days ago that something happened to make me give up that intention. I still suffer, though with a flicker of hope that I may yet undo the evil that I have done. Remember, too, that the mind at my disposal is not my mind. There are things which I knew once and know no longer. There are abilities which I once had, but no longer possess. Some of these things may come back to me, for some of them have already come back. At the moment, for instance, I can write with equal ease the handwriting of Alice or my own. Other modifications have occurred. Still I write as one not in full possession of my own powers, but limited by the medium through which my Ego becomes cognizable. The Daniel Myas of some months ago could have explained in the smallest detail what his intentions were, and how he proposed to carry them out. I have not these details, and am left with generalities.

“I know that it seemed to me that there was but one way in which the independent existence of the Ego could be demonstrated, and that this was by a transference of an Ego to a mind and body other than that with which it had previously been associated. I put it clumsily. Simply, the aim was that Alice Lade and I should for a while exchange our selves—or souls, as I think you preferred to call them. Many years of experiment and observation had convinced me that this exchange was possible. There were limitations, of course, and some of these I cannot recall. But I know that the exchange could only take place between two persons of opposite sexes. I know that it had to take place when these two persons were anesthetized. I have a recollection of a piece of very complicated and elaborate mechanism. I know what firm made it for me. It was in their shop that you saw me. I recollect that there was the necessity for most accurate timing, and that the whole experiment hung, so to speak, on a sixth of a second. Further than that my memory has not helped me. I have seen the specifications of that mechanism written with my own hand, and I cannot understand them. I have by me many volumes of manuscript notes that I made from time to time for my own assistance, and they are as much Greek to me as if I were a first-year student. However, as I have said, a few days ago there came a flicker of hope that my knowledge will come back. In one particular it has already returned, and most wonderfully. You noticed, when we met in Paris, that I spoke French just about as well as I spoke English. I knew the language thoroughly, of course, and therefore the compliment meant nothing to me. The only people who like to be flattered on their French are the people who cannot speak it. I am glad, though, that you noticed it, because it gives me further evidence with which to convince you. In my new incarnation, in the body of Alice Lade, I had practically no knowledge at all of French. I could not read a French book, though I knew what a word here and there meant. I knew what Alice knew exactly, and nothing more than that. A few days ago, quite suddenly, I found that I was actually thinking in French. The whole thing had come back to me. That is why I hope more important knowledge than that may yet come back.”

I paused a moment as I read this. To say that the only people who cared for compliments on their French were the people who could not speak it, would be quite characteristic of Daniel Myas, but Alice Lade would certainly not have said it.

“On the night of my supposed death,” the letter went on, “Alice came secretly to the workroom, as

she had often done before. The righteous and evil-minded people of the neighbourhood made such secrecy a necessity. An hour or more was spent in preparation for the experiment, but I cannot remember in detail what was done. When I try to recall it now, I seem to see myself handling different pieces of apparatus, but I seem to see with the eyes of a person who does not in every case understand the why and the wherefore of what is being done. My last recollection of the moment when we both were passing under the influence of the anæsthetic is the tick—tack of the machinery, seeming to grow intolerably loud and then dying away as if it had vanished into some distant grey mist. My recollection only becomes perfectly clear at the moment when I recovered from the anæsthetic. It was a sudden recovery. I stood up and rubbed my eyes, trying to recall where I was and what I was engaged upon. Then I looked round, and saw, huddled in a chair close to me, my own dead body. I turned and looked into a mirror, and from the mirror the face of Alice Lade looked back at me. Half of the experiment had succeeded and half -had failed. My own Ego was transferred to the body and mind of Alice Lade, but where was she? What had I done with her?

“Then followed a short period of panic and madness. I had the feelings of a murderer, and was possessed with the idea that, to save myself, it was necessary to remove all evidence of the actual experiment which had taken place. I found a hammer and broke up the delicate apparatus which I had employed, and no longer understood. I burned in the stove papers which I think now should have been kept. Remember, I had become a frightened woman. I did things for which there was no reason whatever. I began to make everything neat and tidy. I put drugs away in their place. I swept the broken bits of apparatus into one corner of the room. I hid the little automatic pump which had administered the anæsthetic to the brain of Alice Lade. The other automatic pump I did not dare to touch, because it was too near to the dead body. That, perhaps, was as well.

“I wanted to get out into the open air. I left the dead man lying there, closed and locked the door, and went into the garden. A breath of wind sprang up and shook the dark trees, so that they seemed to be living things that were trying to get at me. I fled up the staircase. The body and mind of Alice seemed to work automatically, doing actions which she must often have repeated, actions which were no longer controlled by the higher centres. I found my way in the dark through a part of the house where I had never been before. I stepped aside to avoid obstacles. At one point I was very careful to tread very quietly on tiptoe. I found the handle of the door easily, without fumbling for it, knowing just where it would be. It was Alice’s bedroom-door.

“It sometimes happens that one comes upon a scene which is really absolutely new, and yet seems familiar. On a road where one has never been before, one seems to expect every bit of it as it comes into view. It is, I suppose, the memory of a dream. My feelings in that room were very much like that. I slept there. It seems a wonderful thing, but for two hours I actually slept. And after that came hours of horror, on which I do not wish to linger. You are not an imaginative man, Compton, but I think you’ll suppose pretty well what I went through. I was not able that night to make any plan of action for the future. All that I thought of was to keep the secret and to save myself at the inquest. I remained alone as much as possible, and said as little as possible. At the inquest, as you know, I lied.

“After the inquest, I tried to get to work again. It was a hopeless business. I was working with the cortex of Alice Lade, not of Daniel Myas. At every step I found that I did not remember and did not know. I tried to get the apparatus reconstructed, which I had broken up in my panic. This has been

done in some sort of a way, but I do not think it is right, and in any case I do not understand its use. I suffered tortures from insomnia and from headache and neuralgia. I was filled with fears that Mrs. Lade, or some one else who had known Alice, would see something strange in me, and would guess my secret. Suicide appeared to be the only thing left for me.

“Then, a few days ago, as I have told you, I suddenly recovered one branch of knowledge which I had lost. Who knows that in time the rest may not come back to me? The nature of Alice was plastic and receptive. The dominant force of my own Ego is even now working upon it. It has modified her mind. It has even produced physical changes. Let me become Daniel Myas with the knowledge that he had before, and with some of the ability that he had before, and I will undo some of the harm which I have done. The soul of Alice Lade shall once more become cognizable by her own mind and body. And my own soul shall go out into whatever it may be that awaits the lost.

“I know that my own feelings before the experiment were feelings of triumph. I felt that I, and I alone, had the secret of life and death. As I write that now, with my present defective knowledge, it looks like the raving of a megalomaniac, but it all seemed logical to my mind then, based on science and working out inevitably. Is there not a faint possibility that I may find myself again in the same position, not with the same feelings of triumph, for these can never come back, but with the same confidence in myself and with the same certainty that what I have done I can also undo?

“I cannot stop here. There are many people in this neighbourhood who knew Alice Lade, and will notice the changes that are taking place in her. Much of her special knowledge is slipping from me. Mrs. Lade speaks of things which she expects me to know all about, and I know nothing of them. The strain of fencing with this is becoming too much for me. An opportunity has now arisen to get Mrs. Lade away to America. I feel a great deal of pity for her. I want to spare her as much as possible, and for that reason alone it is best that she should go. There, perhaps, you will be able to help me. But there are many other ways in which I need your help.

“I had intended to cut myself adrift from you altogether. You probably noticed that I had intended to let you think that Alice Lade still lived, and that I was dead. I was ashamed to let you think the truth. I am ashamed still, but I am compelled to appeal to you. What was done must be undone. You must help me to get away from Knox Street, and you must find for me some place where I can be absolutely alone. If necessary, you must help me in the work. I think circumstances will arise which will require me to give you a power of attorney to deal with all financial business. You understand what I am asking, Compton? I am asking you to help me to bring Alice back again. You must do it.

“It cannot all be arranged by letter. You must come and see me, painful and shocking though this will be to you. I enclose the key of the garden entrance in Durnford Place, the key which you returned. Come tonight after ten, when there will be no fear of interruption.”

There was no signature to the letter. By the time that I had finished reading it, it was beginning to grow dark. I switched on all the lights in the room. I locked the letter away in a drawer, so that I might not see it. I picked up a review and began to read, and found that the words meant nothing to me. I felt sick with horror and disgust. I could not bear to remain alone in my room. As I rose to go out, I heard

a loud voice in the passage outside. It was the voice of Mr. Vulsame.

CHAPTER XIII

I HAD never expected that I could hear with pleasure the voice of Vulsame, even in his more sober moments. But now this crude and material brute was almost a relief to my mind. My servant came in and appeared to be agitated. Mr. Vulsame had not only returned, but had definitely refused to go again. He was sitting on a chair in the hall, using the most awful language, and saying that if I was out he should wait there till I came back again.

“I think,” I said, “it might amuse me to see this man for a few moments. Let him come in here.”

Mr. Vulsame lurched into the room. His gait was slightly more intoxicated than his speech, and his speech was not strictly sober.

“Glad to see you’ve got more sense than that damned fool of a servant of yours, Compton,” said Mr. Vulsame aggressively.

“Sit down,” I said, “and tell me what your business with me is.”

“You’ll know that fast enough, just when I like and how I like. You’ll find I’m top dog this time. Don’t issue orders to me, because I won’t take ’em. I can sit and I can stand.”

“The latter,” I said, “seems to be an over—statement.”

In illustration of my words, he sat down hurriedly and dropped his hat.

“Now then,” he said, “don’t give me any of your damned superior airs, because I’m sick of ’em. I don’t want ’em. What I want is a three-finger whisky and a little soda water.”

“On a superficial observation I should say you are mistaken. But if you really think so, you had better go out and get it.”

“Did I say something just now about your damned superior airs? because if I didn’t, I meant to. Don’t let me have to speak twice. If you offered me a drink, I wouldn’t take it. I’d throw it in your face. I can buy a drink if I want one. I’ve got money, and I’m going to get more. I’m going to get it before I go home to my dinner tonight.”

“Then I’d better not detain you. Go and get it by all means.”

“That’s where you slip up, my friend. That’s where you come down and hurt yourself. I’m going to get that money out of you, unless you want to do time. You wouldn’t look very pretty in a suit of clothes with broad arrows all over it.”

“No,” I said. “And what is it exactly that I’m going to do time for? “

“For bribing an honest man to suppress legal evidence at an inquest, and letting a murderer go free.”

“I have no recollection of anything of the kind. There has been no murder, so far as I know. The last time I had the pleasure of any conversation with you, you pointed out that you were incapable of taking a bribe, but were willing to receive some slight compensation for damage to your practice caused by the late Daniel Myas. That is correct, isn’t it?”

“It’s your way of putting it. I’ve got my own way. Why are Mrs. Lade and her daughter going to bolt to America? Does that look like innocence? You seem to think I know nothing. I was called in to attend a family in Knox Street this morning, and I picked up a thing or two, I can tell you. If I don’t go straight off to the police and tell them everything I know, I run a risk of getting into a good deal of trouble myself, and I don’t run risks for nothing.”

“What is the figure,” I said, “at which you do run risks?”

“One thousand pounds,” said Mr. Vulsame solemnly.

“It is a large sum. I have not so much money at my bank at present. I should be compelled to realize securities.”

“Can’t help that,” said Vulsame. “You’ve brought it on yourself.”

“Suppose I paid you this sum, what security have I got that you will not come here to-morrow demanding another thousand?”

“You’ve the security of my word of honour. You’re dealing with a gentleman. You seem to me to be continually forgetting that.”

“Well,” I said, “of course that would make a difference. If I could have your word of honour given me definitely in writing, I might be prepared to pay this sum, without admitting that I have been in the wrong in any way, but simply in order to save a public scandal.”

“Quite so,” said Vulsame. “I see your point. You’re a sensible man, Mr. Compton. I said so when I came into the room, and I say so again. You don’t want any public scandal. Give me this sum of money, and you’ll get no public scandal. You’ll never hear of it again. Nobody will. And I’ll write anything you like. But as a matter of business, you don’t get my undertaking in writing until I’ve got your cheque—see? You say you haven’t got a thousand at the bank, but I suppose they might cash your cheque for that amount.”

“Of course they would. They hold my securities.”

“Very good. Sit down and write the cheque now. Make it payable to G. W. Vulsame, Esq., M.B., or heater. Not order, mind, and don’t cross it.”

I sat down meekly and wrote the cheque as directed. Then Vulsame came to the writing-table and gave me a receipt and his written undertaking that he would not molest me further, either with regard to the death of Myas or in any other respect. I locked up the receipt and the undertaking, and he put the cheque in his pocket and prepared to go. Really, it was all so easy that I was almost ashamed to do it,

but the man was very drunken and disgusting, and had made me angry.

“One moment before you go, Mr. Vulsame,” I said. “I do not recommend you to present that cheque for payment at the Bank to-morrow morning, as the money will not be paid and you will be immediately arrested.”

“What for? What are you talking about?”

“Don’t be childish. You must see. You have threatened to charge me with being an accessory after the fact in the murder of Daniel Myas, and have withdrawn the charge in consideration of receiving a sum that you have demanded. You have given me evidence in your own handwriting that you have done this. If I remember rightly, this particular offence is punishable with penal servitude for life. The law does not encourage blackmail, you know.”

This sobered him. He took the cheque from his pocket and tore it in half. “Give me back that undertaking of mine,” he said.

“My dear Mr. Vulsame, you cannot suppose I shall do anything so silly as that. Behave nicely and you will hear nothing more about it. That’s all I can do for you.”

“I’m just going to tell you what I think of you, Mr. Compton. I’m going to say it in plain words. You’ve played a dirty trick on me. You—”

“Stop that,” I said, “and get out!”

Rather to my surprise, he did exactly as he was told. The alcoholic collapse had followed on the alcoholic courage. I congratulated myself that I had seen the last of Mr. Vulsame. I congratulated myself prematurely. As it happened, I saw him again that very night.

In one respect I felt grateful to the blackguard. For a few minutes, at any rate, he had taken my mind from that letter and the handwriting of a man whom I knew to be dead, summoning me to come and see him in a few hours’ time. I was determined not to go to Durnford Place. I changed my clothes and walked round to the club for dinner. I had meant to look in at a telegraph office on the way and send my excuses. In my own rooms I had gone to the telephone, but had stopped short; I was afraid of what I might hear on the telephone.

I did not go into the telegraph office. It would be easy enough to send a telegram from the club. But of course the thing that really stopped me was the conviction that, however much I might hate it and however great my horror, I should have to go to Durnford Place that night. There was the direct appeal for help. Whether it came from a man or from a woman, it came from a friend of mine, and to disregard it would have been to lose my most precious possession, my self-respect. Once I had determined that I should have to go, my mind became much easier. I played billiards for half-an-hour after dinner, and gave my whole attention to the game. And then it was time to have a taxicab called.

CHAPTER XIV

I HAVE occasionally seen, when for my sins I have been taken to a music-hall, a performance which is, I believe, intended to be amusing and funny—the impersonation of a woman by a man. It is a thing which always disgusts me. The more cleverly it is done, the more loathsome it is. If I happen to see that item on ahead in the programme, I take care to be out of sight and sound of it. I do not know if this is a special peculiarity or weakness of my own, but it helped to add to the difficulty of what I had to do. I had been the friend of Myas, and I had been the friend of Alice Lade. Whatever was waiting for me behind the door of the laboratory had a claim upon me. I, plain, conventional, and unimaginative man, as Myas had described me, had by sheer force of circumstances been drawn into a very whirlpool of horror and morbidity. I had to go through the mud.

Now that I had made up my mind to it, I went through the thing pretty steadily. There was an electric light in my taxicab, and on my way to Durnford Place I read the evening paper assiduously. Whoever this creature was that had appealed to me in the undoubted handwriting of Daniel Myas, it was a person desperately in need of my help and advice. Help and advice cannot be given intelligently by the perturbed and terror-stricken. By the time that I had read the last advertisement of the latest hair-restorer, I had brought myself, I think, to my normal frame of mind. At first I had some trouble with my key; the lock of the garden—door had not perhaps been much used of late, and had rusted. I began to think that I should have to go round to Knox Street, but at last the thing went back with a click and the door stood open. In a dark comer, from a mass of dusty laurels, a cat began to cry like a child. The place was very dark. The blinds were drawn down over the windows of the workroom, and only a faint glimmer of light shone behind them. I groped my way to the door and knocked—my usual brisk, social knock.

I had expected it, of course, and I think it should have had less effect upon me than it did. The voice which bade me enter was deep and resonant. It was the voice of Daniel Myas. I knew it to be his voice, and yet I had seen his dead body as it lay in the coffin. I'm afraid that I hesitated for a second or two before I could bring myself to turn the handle of the door.

The workroom was, perhaps, thirty-six feet in length. Near the door by which I had entered, there was one electric light, heavily shaded. I could see rows of bottles and retorts, and stands of test-tubes. Books were scattered about. The further end of the workroom seemed at first to be in complete darkness. Then, as my eyes got accustomed, I could distinguish something moving. It came a very little nearer to me, and now I could distinguish a man's dressing-gown, with the sleeves turned back, because the arms within were too short for it. The collar of the dressing-gown was turned up, and there was a veil over the face.

Again the voice of Myas came out of the darkness—

“I know exactly what you're feeling, Compton. You needn't shake hands. I understand.” “Nonsense,” I said; and, advancing, took in my own the small hand of Alice Lade. Through the veil I could distinguish dimly the face of Alice Lade, but through her eyes the eyes of Daniel Myas looked out.

That was, perhaps, the supreme touch of terror—the eyes of the man looking from the woman's face.

He thanked me for coming, and motioned me to a leather-covered chair by the lamp. I notice that I have written the word “he” —it conveys the impression made on me. He himself sat at some distance from me, in the dusk.

“My voice must have been a shock to you,” he said. “You know, of course, that the organs of the voice are peculiarly susceptible of variation, and there my dominant personality has made a great change. I can still write in the handwriting of Alice—I made the experiment just before you came in—but I cannot speak with her voice. When I try to do it, I produce an absurd falsetto. There are other changes that you may have noticed.”

“The colour of the hair seems to me darker,” I said. “I noticed it when you came into the light just now.”

“Yes, the pigmentation of the hair and of the iris of the eye have changed. Do you see what this means? Sooner or later, with all my care and precautions, Mrs. Lade will be definitely certain that there's something wrong. I only dare to speak to her in whispers, making a pretence that my voice is affected by a cold. But that kind of thing cannot go on indefinitely. This afternoon she knocked at the door and asked me if I would not see Mrs. Porter. I have not the faintest notion who Mrs. Porter is. Probably Alice knew her very well. You see the trouble, don't you? As I get back some of the knowledge that Daniel Myas had, I lose some of the knowledge that Alice had. The first thing I want you to do for me, the very first thing, is to get Mrs. Lade to go away to America. I don't want to be cruel to her, I want to spare her. If she found out what is going on in me, I think it would kill her. Can you get her to go?”

“I can,” I said. “I think I can promise that definitely. I saw her this afternoon, and she made a suggestion then as to your mental state, which I shall be able to make use of.”

He began to thank me, and broke off abruptly, and groaned as if in extreme physical pain. Then he took up a hypodermic syringe and I saw the heavy sleeve of the dressing—gown pulled back, and a small and feminine white arm.

There was a moment's pause, and then he apologized for the interruption. “Acute pain,” he said. “It is part of the price I pay for what I have done. When the Ego of a man becomes cognizable by the body of a woman, that body must suffer. If it should happen again, don't take any notice of it, please. When can you get Mrs. Lade to go?”

“The idea that occurred to me was to make her believe that your restoration to health absolutely depended upon her departure. If she can be made to believe that, she will go by the end of the week. Can you get along until then?”

“Yes,” he said. “I shall see her very little, and never in a room that is brightly lit. You will tell her not to prolong the last scene, when she says good-bye to me. You can say that the strain might be dangerous for me.” “Yes,” I said. “I think you may consider all that as settled. But that is only the beginning of things. What are you going to do, my friend, after she has gone? What is to become of

you?”

I remained for over an hour longer, talking with this ghastly hermaphrodite. Part of the time he spoke in French, and I dare say he did this with intention. To me it was entirely convincing. Alice Lade may have known a few words of French, but certainly she could not have spoken it like that. Very few men in England could have spoken it quite like that. He had his scheme quite ready. His one aim was to bring Alice Lade back again. It was to that end, and to his own self-obliteration that he now meant to devote himself. He believed, though the belief seemed to me instinctive rather than reasonable, that if he could recover the knowledge he possessed before the experiment, this would become possible.

As soon as Mrs. Lade had gone, he meant to get to some place where he was not known, and there to continue his work.

I told him of my little cottage, standing all by itself on a hill in Gloucestershire. I was ready to put this cottage and my two servants there at his disposal. He accepted this with great gratitude. When I warned him that the place was desperately lonely, for the first time he laughed—a short grim laugh. He wanted nothing better than to be quite alone now. Mrs. Lade was to leave for Southampton on the Friday, and on the Saturday following he would go down to Gloucestershire.

Then he told me something which, after all, did not greatly surprise me. He had made up his mind that he would no longer even try to pass as Alice Lade. He would not go down to Gloucestershire as a woman at all. Already, so he said, he felt it would be more easy to pass as a man than as a woman. As a man he would have more freedom and independence. He would be able to go about alone. He needed, of course, a complete outfit of man's clothes, and he had already taken all the measurements, so that I might get these for him. They were to be ready made, of course; there was no time for anything else. The power of attorney had also been prepared beforehand. He dealt with the necessary financial arrangements in a businesslike matter-of-fact way. And somehow every one of these prosaic touches seemed to add to the ghastliness of the whole thing.

“I am taking a great deal from you,” he said, “and I am giving you a deal of trouble. I know that the sight of me must disgust and distress you. If it can possibly be managed, we will not meet again.”

“Don't say that,” I said. “I am sorry for you and glad to be able to do anything for you. It does not amount to very much, when all is said and done. And certainly I intend to see you again. I am not going to leave you to go mad in solitude. I admit that I find the whole thing horrible. You would not believe me if I said I did not. You have done something which is against Nature.”

“That is it,” he said. “That is exactly it. And Nature punishes.”

I shook hands again with him when I left. I hope he did not feel how much I hated to do it.

CHAPTER XV

I HAD not kept my cab, and started to walk until I found one. I had only gone a few yards from the garden-door in Durnford Place, when I heard a man running after me, and turned sharply round. I found myself face to face with Mr. Vulsame. When he left me in the afternoon he had been a collapsed wreck, but he had been drinking again and had recovered his spirits. He seemed to be extremely excited, but he was no longer unsteady on his legs nor thick in his speech.

“I’ve got you,” he said, shaking a clenched fist. “This is a fair knock-out. This explains everything?”

“I don’t know what you mean, Mr. Vulsame, and I don’t want to know. I have had a great deal to try me today, and I do not think it would be wise for you to try me any further. You had better go home. If you want to communicate with me, you can write, you know.”

But he would not be stopped. “I’ll say what I’ve got to say. I’m not afraid of you nor of twenty like you. You were mighty particular that I should give back my key to the garden-gate, weren’t you? You were ready to pay out your money to save the girl, and you did it. Now I know why. It’s a bit indecent, seeing Myas has only been dead a few months.”

“Well,” I said, “if you will have it, you must.” I gave him a good punch in the face, and he went down on the pavement. Very slowly, and breathing hard, he collected his hat, which had fallen off, and replaced it, and struggled to his feet. I had waited to see if he wished to attempt the usual form of retort, but as he did not, and merely babbled solicitors, I told him to go to the devil, and left him. Apparently sobriety brought wisdom, for I never heard from Mr. Vulsame’s solicitors.

I spent rather a horrible night. I slept, but the creature that I had talked to in the laboratory haunted my dreams.

Next morning there was a great deal to do, and no time to be lost. I went to see Mrs. Lade, going to the Knox Street entrance. I had telegraphed to her to expect me, and found her waiting and rather too well dressed. I said that I had seen her daughter, and I quoted the opinion of a non-existent medical man. I said that her own theory had been quite correct, that Alice’s mind had been affected by her profound grief at her loss. The doctor recommended that she should be taken away into the country at once, and I undertook to see to that myself. It was expected that in time she would recover, and then doubtless she would regain her old affection for her mother and wish to go out and join her in New York. One has to tell these kindly lies, I suppose. To Mrs. Lade the voice of a doctor was as the voice of a god. Once the medical authority was quoted, it was easy to do anything with her. When I left her, she was going round to fetch Mrs. Porter to help her with the packing. I was to book her passage, and I offered, if she cared about it, to see her off. But I was rather glad that the offer was refused. She said that Mrs. Porter had been a great friend to her in her time of trouble, and would expect to accompany her to Southampton. I gathered that, not only would Mrs. Porter be gratified by being able to render this service to her friend, but that also it would be to her somewhat of a jaunt at the friend’s expense. My last words to Mrs. Lade enjoined her to make as much haste as possible, and to keep out of her daughter’s way. The doctor, I said, had insisted upon that. She might see her just for a moment, to say

good—bye, but no more than that. I felt quite sure that Mrs. Lade would be far too agitated at this last interview to notice any of these slight changes which had occurred in Myas-Lade's appearance. I cannot say that any of this was work which I liked doing. Frankly, I hated it, but it had to be done, and quite as much for Mrs. Lade's own sake as for the sake of Daniel Myas.

In the afternoon I went to the stores where I was to buy the outfit. I gave the assistant the measurements, and he found me at once some suits of clothes which would do well enough. The only trouble was about the boots.

"You see, sir," said the assistant, "it is quite an unusually small size for a man. Ladies' boots, of course, we could do in that size, but that's not what you require."

Ultimately I succeeded in finding boys' boots which would do. The assistant's words had rather put me on my guard. I paid the things, and he asked me to what address they should be sent. I was on the verge of giving the name, and then stopped myself. "I'll take them myself. I have a cab waiting outside. Let them be packed up and taken down to it."

In the cab I scribbled a brief note to Myas on a leaf from my pocket-book, telling him what I had done so far, and asking him to speak to me on the telephone at nine o'clock that evening. I stopped at a stationer's and bought an envelope for this. I addressed it to Miss Lade and put the note in the envelope underneath the string of the pack age. I drove to Knox Street and found that Mrs. Lade was out; she also had an outfit to buy. I directed her servant to take the things just as they were to Miss Lade, but I did not myself go in.

Punctually at nine o'clock that night my telephone bell went. I had a long conversation with Myas, pausing at intervals to prevent the exchange from cutting me off. We spoke principally about the house and laboratory. He wished these to be left exactly as they were. I was to find a caretaker for them, and it was to be a caretaker who had never seen himself or the Lades. He wanted me to order for him a portmanteau and a suit—case with the initials M. D. stamped on them. I asked him how he was going to pack the rest of his things, his books and his apparatus. He surprised me rather by saying that he was not going to pack them at all. He was going to take nothing of the kind with him to the cottage. He gave me his reasons. His knowledge of French and his ability to speak it had come back to him quite suddenly, and without any effort on his part. He believed that his special scientific knowledge would come back to him in the same way without effort or struggle. All he had to do was to remain quietly up there in the cottage, reading my books, wandering over the country, trying to think of other things.

Somehow the voice no longer inspired me with any feeling of horror. It was exactly like the voice of Daniel Myas. It created the illusion that it was Myas himself, with no change in him, who was speaking. It struck me that as far as possible he avoided any but the most commonplace subjects. He took common-sense views about the house in Knox Street. He wondered if it would be worth while to let it, but on the whole decided that a caretaker would be preferable. He asked me, almost as if it were a matter of real importance, what I thought the wages of a caretaker ought to be.

So little disturbed was I by this conversation, that I asked him to come and see me in St. James's Street on the Saturday morning before his departure. I went to bed, well satisfied with my day's work, and with my peace of mind restored to me. But no sooner did I fall asleep than the old horror returned

to me in the form of a dream.

In my dream I was wandering very late at night over a Yorkshire moor. I knew the place well, I had been to a shoot there. It was a stormy night, and the violent wind tore my cap off. I could not find it, and I went on bareheaded, a few drops of cold rain splashing in my face. Already a feeling of imminent horror had begun, though I did not know what form it would take. Suddenly I saw a bright light. It was an electric lamp like those that they have in Hyde Park. I ran towards it as fast as I could go. I clung to it panting. I was glad to be there in the circle of light, and afraid to go out into the dark again. Suddenly, at a little distance, where the light was at its faintest, I saw a figure moving. It danced about fantastically and came nearer. It was a small white figure of a woman, wearing a man's heavy dressing-gown. Her long hair streamed in the wind. The wind caught the heavy folds of the dressing-gown, and tossed them hither and thither. With a quick rush the figure slid up to me, and put two small and cold hands on my throat. It whispered in my ear, and the voice was a husky falsetto, as if Daniel Myas had been trying to imitate the voice of Alice Lade.

"That's exactly it," said the voice. "It is against Nature, and Nature punishes. It is said that there is no place for me, neither in this world nor elsewhere."

I woke with a start, and switched on the reading-lamp by my bedside. I fetched a book from the library. It was one of the Badminton volumes. I got back to bed again and read, studying the subject of punt-racing, as though I were getting it up for an examination. I was determined not to fall asleep again. At last there came the early morning sounds, the twitter of the sparrows and the clatter of a milk-cart. I felt with relief that after all the ordinary world was around me. I put down the volume, switched out the light, and almost instantly fell asleep again.

I got up at my usual hour, unrefreshed by the sleep, haggard and worn out, and depressed by the feeling that there was something to come—something hanging over me. I recalled what it was. Myas was to leave by an afternoon train from Paddington on Saturday afternoon, and I had asked him to come and see me in the morning. There would be time to stop that. I walked across to the telephone and took down the receiver.

"Number, please?" said the girl at the exchange.

"It's all right," I said. "It's a mistake, I don't want anything." After all, I could not do it. It was too absolutely selfish and cowardly.

CHAPTER XVI

“A MR. DANIEL is asking if you will see him, sir.”

I knew that Mr. Daniel was Daniel Myas. He had told me of his intention to use another name. I directed that he should be shown into the library where I was sitting.

The first impression he made upon me was one of strangeness. I thought I had never seen him before, and did not know him in the least. There was really nothing about him which reminded me of Alice Lade. The hair had been quite short and was of a reddish-brown in colour. The eyes were the eyes of a man. Indeed, the general appearance, though it suggested an undersized and nervous little man, ludicrously out of keeping with the deep voice, had nothing that was feminine about it. His face was very white, and he looked as if he were ravaged by disease, but he no longer appeared, as on that night in the laboratory, to be in actual physical pain. His expression was one of distinct relief. He no longer inspired me with horror, but for the first few minutes, at any rate, I felt as if I were talking to a man whom I did not know.

He took a cigarette and began to say commonplace things. He had left his luggage at Paddington, where he would pick it up in the afternoon. He wondered how long it would take him to drive to Paddington. As he spoke, I noticed that his manner with the cigarette was that of Daniel Myas exactly. When a little ash fell on his coat, and he flicked it off, he swore just as Myas always did, with set teeth and without a sound beyond the initial letter. It was characteristic of Myas that the trivial things in life made him much more furious than the great disasters. I began to feel that, after all, I did know this young man in the blue serge suit, sitting opposite to me and watching me anxiously to see how I was taking it.

“How did you manage to effect this transformation?” I asked him. “I should have thought it was impossible for any one anywhere in London to take on the dress of the opposite sex, without taking somebody into the secret, or without being found out.”

“As it happens,” said Myas-Lade, “it was simple enough. That old woman, the caretaker, wanted to go out to do her shopping. I told her that she could be away for an hour, if she liked, and that I should probably have left before she returned. I had everything ready in the laboratory. My clothes were all packed, except those which I meant to wear. The hair gave me some trouble. I cut it short myself, as well as I could, but not very short, and burnt it in the laboratory stove. After I had changed, I went first to Paddington, where I left my luggage, and then to the nearest barber. I told him that I had been living for months in a lonely spot in the West Highlands, away from the resources of civilization, and had to cut my hair myself. He seemed quite satisfied, and not much interested. Of course, some one who knew me might have seen me coming out with my luggage to the cab that was waiting in Durnford Place. Even if any one did, it does not matter in the least. No one would have recognized me. You yourself, Compton, look as if you were hardly sure who it was who was speaking to you.”

“That is very likely,” I said. “I knew Daniel Myas and Alice Lade. When I saw you that night in the laboratory, there was something of each personality in you. Now, in appearance at any rate, there is

nothing that suggests either. Only the voice and the manner recall Daniel Myas to me. You look as though you were no longer in any pain.”

“I am not,” said Myas. “Last night, for the first time since the night of the experiment, I managed to get four hours’ continuous sleep. Somehow it seems almost worth while to have suffered as I did, in order to get the ecstasy of being free from suffering. It is almost difficult for me to understand how it is, that people who are not in bodily pain do not experience constant and conscious pleasure from their freedom. I do not suppose that it is all over. On the contrary, the pain is almost certain to return, but that I do not mind. I have had my breathing-space. If it comes back tenfold, I can bear it now, and go on bearing it until the work is finished.”

“Until the work is finished,” I repeated. “You seem confident.”

“I am confident. Yes, Compton, I shall not come to see you again, but Alice Lade will. It is only a matter of patience. What happened in the one case will happen in another. Because the knowledge of a language came back, therefore most certainly the other knowledge will return.”

“And then?”

“That knowledge will form the means for my release. I use the word ‘release’ intentionally. My Ego, my soul, is detained here like some poor animal that has one foot caught in a trap. My body is dead. The apparatus of my mind contained in that body is dead. It is only, as it were, by murder and theft, that I, Daniel Myas, am cognizant to you now. I am due elsewhere.”

I have known people who were very old or very ill to have that same curious feeling of being due elsewhere.

He told me much that was very curious. The knowledge which belonged specially to Alice had not entirely left him. Before the caretaker’s arrival, he had gone through the rooms in the house in Knox Street, and in one of them had found the cheap foreign piano on which Alice used to play. To own a piano and to give Alice music-lessons had formed part of the laudable ambition of Mrs. Lade. Alice had some slight gift for music —nothing very remarkable. Myas was perhaps more of a musician *au fond*, but he played no instrument and had never had a lesson.

The sight of the piano seemed to awaken something which had been dormant in him. He sat down and began to play. What he played was part of a movement, very tinkly and simple, of one of Mozart’s sonatas. Suddenly, he became conscious of what he was doing, and stopped abruptly in the middle of a phrase. He could not go on playing. The sub-conscious mind of Alice Lade made it possible. The conscious mind inhibited it. He told me that when Mrs. Lade spoke with him about things that Alice would be supposed to know, he always found it easier to answer if he closed his eyes and tried to keep his conscious mind on some other subject.

In one trifling respect, he showed the personal taste of Alice Lade still. Daniel Myas had been an epicure and a judge of wine. Alice Lade hated the taste of it, and otherwise cared very little about what she ate or drank. I noticed that at luncheon Myas-Lade drank water only. He saw that I had noticed it.

“Yes,” he said, “it is so. The other day I went into a confectioner’s shop and bought sweets to eat. Perhaps after all it is not so strange that something still lingers, as that so much has already gone.”

I did not go with him to the station. Much time is wasted in a very wearisome manner by kindly people in seeing other kindly people get into a railway carriage. I had promised to run down for a week-end at the cottage in a fortnight’s time. Meanwhile I thought I was to have a rest from a trying and rather revolting business. I turned to that manuscript diary of which I have spoken, and resumed my work on it. I must have become rather absorbed in it. I have a faint recollection of telling my servant that I would not take tea and did not want to be bothered. It was seven o’clock before I finally put down the thing and went to dress for dinner. The window of my bedroom as usual stood open. Outside in the street I could hear the newspaper boys crying, “Disaster on the Great .Western Railway.”

CHAPTER XVII

I COULD learn very little more that night. I got all the evening papers, of course, but the notices were very scanty, and did not in details agree with one another. The train in which Myas—Lade had travelled had been wrecked. He might or might not be dead. My first impulse was to go off at once to Paddington and see what details they had, but I did not go, and I think my second thoughts were the wiser.

The morning papers gave fuller information. The accident had been due to the error of a signalman. The human machine, however near perfection, is never quite perfect. Considering the nature of the accident, the number of those actually killed was very small. Among the headlines of the account I read, “Sensational Discovery—Unknown Woman Disguised as a Man.” Myas—Lade had been killed, his face being rendered unrecognizable. The railway authorities were doing their best to trace his identity.

What was I to do? Again I did not follow my first impulse. My first impulse was to go down and claim the body and see that it had decent burial. Then I saw that would not do at all. In the -trail of identification would come explanation, and the secrecy on which Myas-Lade had so strongly insisted would be lost. It seemed to me, right or wrong, that I carried out his wishes best if I did absolutely nothing.

The evening papers had further details of that sensational discovery. The handkerchief and linen of the dead girl bore the initials M.D. The man’s clothing which she was wearing was absolutely new. There was a further supply of new clothing found in luggage which almost certainly belonged to her. It bore the same initials, contained clothes which would have fitted her, and had not been otherwise claimed. A later edition said it had been possible to find the stores from which the clothes had been bought, the name being on the buttons, and there was a short interview with the assistant who had actually sold the things. He maintained stoutly that the person to whom he sold them was beyond question a man, and moreover a man who could not have worn those clothes himself. He gave a description of my personal appearance, which was flattering but inaccurate. So far as I was concerned, I felt no nervousness about being drawn into the affair. I have no eccentricities. I dress exactly like other men in the same position as myself. Myas used to chaff me rather bitterly about my passion for resembling other people. I had paid cash for the clothes, given no name or address, and taken the things away myself. Unless they found the cabman who had driven me on that occasion, there was no possibility that the true story would come to light.

The real cabman never came forward. Another cabman did provide a somewhat wild story. He had driven two people, he said, on that afternoon from the stores to a spot on Wimbledon Common. There he had been dismissed and had been paid double his fare. One of the two people answered to the assistant’s description of myself, and the other was a girl. His story did not bear examination. It was excessively vague. The only definite thing about him was his desire to make a pound or two out of an evening paper.

I did not attend the inquest, but I was present at the funeral. The body was decently buried at the expense of the railway company, and was followed to the grave by a crowd of people who had never known Myas nor Alice Lade. The effect of a sensational story on an uneducated mind is really very astonishing. Some of these absolute strangers had even sent expensive floral tributes. I wrote to my servants at the cottage that my friend had changed his mind at the last moment and had decided not to go down to the country after all. Old Welsford still quotes this occasionally in his more pious moments on Sunday afternoon, as an instance of what he calls a special providence. I wrote at the same time to Mrs. Lade in America, and gave her a very bad account of her daughter's health. I wanted gradually to prepare her for the news of the death. She wrote back that this was only what she had expected, and that she knew she would never see Alice alive again. It was a comfort to her that I was looking after the girl, and she was sure she could trust me to do all that could be done. She seemed to have grown very fond of her little nephews and nieces, of whom she gave me particulars. She added that she liked America, but that breakfasts there seemed to be a very different thing. It was a simple, kindly letter, and I liked it for its simplicity. Any fool can punctuate, and Mrs. Lade's pages were innocent of all punctuation, but that gift of simplicity is much rarer. It was the one distinguished thing about her.

Thus, in two graves many miles apart, lie the body of a man who loved knowledge and of the woman who loved that man. I do not know whether it is a vain hope that somewhere in the hereafter their souls have met and put old mistakes right again. It is not a thing that one can know, but I confess to the hope. And with that I close all that I can say at present of Daniel Myas and Alice Lade, and turn once more to devote myself to my more important historical work.

POSTSCRIPT

I

FOUR years have elapsed since I put down in a rough and ready way my experiences of Dr. Daniel Myas and Alice Lade. It seemed to me at that time that the problem was ended. The body and mind of both of them had suffered what is known as death; their souls were no longer cognizable on this earth.

But since I closed the record, I have been on several occasions tempted to reopen it. There was that extraordinary letter I received from Vulsame, and my strange glimpse of him on the beach at Brighton. There was the long and interesting conversation which I had with Dr. Habaden on the experiment of Myas and the part I had played in connection with it. There was the incident of the telephone message, which is still to me quite inexplicable. I have decided to make a brief note of these things, and there are reasons why it must be done at once. I have been suffering from a revival and extension of the old trouble, which many years ago shut me out from the profession of my choice, and from other things which would have made life more enjoyable. Dr. Habaden and the other doctors whom he has seen in consultation take a serious view of the case and are in practical agreement about it. As I am not a particularly timid or hysterical person, I have persuaded them to speak quite frankly to me. Their verdict is that with care I may last for another six months. Old bachelors like myself are liable to acquire habits of almost absurd punctiliousness and tidiness. I have the feeling that I should like to leave this record finished as far as I can finish it. But I have no exaggerated ideas about it. I do not suppose that the facts with reference to Dr. Myas recorded by me would be of the slightest value to any scientific investigator in his particular field of research. I deprecate research in that field altogether. I would prevent it as I would prevent a child from playing with fire. I have seen the horror of it, and I have grown to hate it. It is not only of the case of Dr. Myas I am thinking, as I say this. I have seen in other instances how that enthusiasm for the sealed and hidden knowledge has led to disaster to madness and to suicide.

II

About six months after the railway accident, I received a letter signed G. W. Vulsame, which was rather surprising. Perhaps the most surprising point about it was that it contained a cheque to myself signed by him for the sum of forty-eight pounds ten shillings. He told me that he had disposed of his practice, and that he was now acting as assistant to a doctor in Whitechapel. He said that he had to acknowledge with the deepest shame and contrition that he had swindled me. It was to some extent true that the experiments of Myas had caused injurious talk in the neighbourhood, but it was also true that he had already received full compensation from Myas on this account. The decay of his practice was, he said, in reality due to his own drinking habits, which he had now happily overcome. "But," he wrote, "I do not suppose for one moment that you were deceived. You did not pay this money as compensation, you paid it as a bribe to me to hold my tongue. You put temptation in my way and I fell. My conscience commands me to restore this money. I have not the sum of three hundred pounds at present, but I send a first instalment. I will send the rest, as soon as I can save it from the proceeds of my work. It is not for me to judge you for your part in this business, but if your conscience is not

atrophied by years of the life of a selfish worldling, you will reproach yourself. Oh, my dear Mr. Compton, I do wish you would let me come and see you. Any appointment you like to make I would keep with gratitude. I am so anxious to bring you to the only true and lasting happiness.”

There was another page or two of the same kind of material. I returned him his cheque, and wrote that my conscience did not trouble me in the least with reference to that payment of three hundred pounds, that I declined to receive any part of it back, and that he had better devote the money, if he wished to get rid of it, to some other object. I also said that I did not wish to see him, and that I had given instructions to my servants that he was not to be admitted. There was something about the man, whether drunken and ebullient, or sober and didactic, that annoyed me extremely. It was a positive satisfaction to me to be rude to him. He further infuriated me by a brief and unnecessary reply to my letter, in which he said that I had his full forgiveness.

In the summer of the following year, I had brought my car from Gloucestershire to London, and ran down to Brighton for a week-end. I had a friend of mine with me, a man who was a mighty walker, and on Sunday morning he made me walk over the Downs with him to Lewes. We lunched there and walked back by a different route. The weather was quite perfect, and if my friend had not bored me slightly by his insistence on the good the exercise was doing me, I should have enjoyed it extremely. As we came back along the King’s Road to the hotel, I heard the usual cacophony that betokens that a section of the Salvation Army has got to work. They were perverting the beautiful melody of “Drink to me only with thine eyes” to the words of a hymn. As this finished, a voice that I recognized at once rang out in clear and commanding tones. I turned to my friend.

“I know that man who is speaking,” I said. “I want to go down and listen to him. He interests me.”

“By all means. You will excuse me if he doesn’t interest me, won’t you? I’ll go on to the hotel.”

“Right. We’ll meet at dinner.”

The little group of earnest people on the beach below me were mostly of a low type. They had the crooked faces and stunted frames of degenerates. Still, I want to be quite fair, and I must say that Vulsame, the speaker, seemed to me to have improved immensely. He had lost his bloated look, He had gained something which he had never had before, an air of sincerity. His face was white, his eyes were fanatical. I did not wish him to recognize me, and when I went down on to the beach I took up my position behind him. He was giving, in much detail and with some self-complacency, an account of his own transgressions. This led him to speak of other sinners that he had known. Soon, to my amazement, he was launched on a somewhat fanciful portrait of myself. He considerably overstated my income and my other worldly advantages. He imputed to me a villainy which would require far more of the romantic spirit than my very ordinary nature possesses. His final verdict that I must have led thousands astray was, I think, quite unjust. Every moment I expected to hear him roar out my actual name to the gaping housemaids in his audience. But in this respect he spared me. His moral was that there were many men like myself, not criminals in the eyes of the law, and on the contrary enjoying high positions and the respect of their fellows, who were none the less lost for ever. There was only one supreme satisfaction, and these poor wretches had never found it. He said that he himself had sought that satisfaction in the pursuit of knowledge and in the pursuit of pleasure, and it was not there. He went on to make a fervent appeal to his audience, with no rhetorical skill, but with

the most desperate sincerity. Perspiration streamed from his forehead, tears stood in his eyes. Presently, as the band showed signs of renewed activity, I strolled away. I have not since then seen Vulsame again, nor have I heard any further news of him. I have often wondered what became of him—whether, as seems more probable, he had a further relapse, or whether, as is not impossible, there was some further advance and he is now a good Catholic.

But the thing which struck me most—the thought which haunted me at dinner that night—was that here, by some magic touch, had come a change of personality. The Vulsame that I had just seen was not the man that I had seen before. It was a different being. I suppose that to some extent a similar change goes on in all of us. The tissues of the body waste and are renewed. The personality changes with it. What has the child of six in common with the man of sixty that he subsequently becomes? Was the miracle that Myas tried to effect any more wonderful than that normal miracle which is going on every day in all of us? It is strange how we cling to a belief in a permanent personality. Life everlasting means little to most of us, unless it be the life everlasting of the individual.

Can one believe in that? It may occur to my readers that at a later point an answer to this question was given me.

III

One evening in that year it happened that my old friend, Dr. Habaden, was dining with me alone and chanced to speak of Daniel Myas.

“You knew him, I think. What became of him?”

In answer I told him for the first time, very much as I have set it down here, the story of Daniel Myas and Alice Lade. He did not seem greatly surprised. I suppose that these accomplished men of medicine are rarely surprised. His attitude to me was rather one of irritation. He was angry with me.

“Really, Compton,” he said, “it seems to me that you’ve been taking too much upon yourself. Self-confidence is all very well, but it has its limits. You are a layman, and could not be supposed to understand the problem that was before you. But why, knowing yourself to be ignorant, did you not apply to somebody with some knowledge of the subject? Putting it plainly, why on earth, when some appearance of the personality of Myas began to show itself in this Lade girl, did you not consult me?”

“Well, I did not consider it to be some appearance of a personality. I considered it to be the actual thing.”

“Nonsense,” said Habaden impatiently.

“Then again, it seemed to me to be a thing entirely outside your beat. If I were ill, I should come to you. But how does your special knowledge bear on an exchange of souls? I am an ignorant layman, as you say, but I am quite willing to learn anything that you can teach. What is your view of the case?”

“The only possible view. Myas was a clever man, as I have always admitted to you. And I have no

doubt that he was sincere. He probably did believe that by some fantastic method of his own—some weird game with electrical apparatus—this exchange of personalities could under certain conditions be accomplished. Anæsthesia was one of the conditions. His ideas were quite wild and undisciplined, and he was trying to do a thing that is not possible and never has been and never will be. He died in the attempt. Make no mistake about that. Myas died from the effects of the chloride of ethyl. It is dangerous stuff. We use it as a spray to produce local anæsthesia mostly. His soul, if he had a soul, may have gone through various adventures, of which neither I nor anybody else can possibly know anything. But the one thing which is quite certain is that his soul did not enter into possession of the mind and body of Alice Lade.”

“Very well. And now, perhaps, you account for Alice Lade as I saw her in the laboratory that night.”

“Certainly I will. What you witnessed was very much less unusual than you think. There are many similar cases of double personality on record, though I admit that the case of Alice Lade has its peculiar and interesting features. There is nothing surprising in the fact that she should have suffered from mental disorder. You know, as well as I do, that every anæsthetic produces a temporary disorder of the mind. This disorder may become in part, and sometimes does become, permanent and persistent. It was not the first time that Myas had given an anæsthetic to that poor girl. On your own showing he had done so frequently. The shock of his death provides another possible cause, especially when one considers the circumstances of it and her devotion to him. The person you saw in the laboratory that night was Alice Lade and nobody else, but it was Alice Lade with a fixed delusion that she was Daniel Myas, and with some very curious but quite unconvincing physical evidence to show for her belief. As I have said, it was a case of double personality.”

“You have come across such cases before?”

“They are not in my line. They would not be brought to me. But I have read of them, and I know doctors who have seen them. For instance, a girl who is morose and well educated wakes up one morning as a totally different person. She is now very cheerful, but absolutely ignorant of the things she knew previously. Sometimes the two states alternate. Sometimes in one state the subject has no memory whatever of what has happened in the other. The thing is explained to my mind by the theory of complete somnambulism. Alice Lade was a case for medical treatment. In fostering her delusion, and in allowing her to dress as a man and to go off by herself, you did very wrong.”

“Habaden,” I said, “the fact that there have been similar cases and that they have been classified, does not impress me very much. Classification is not explanation. You talk about absolute somnambulism. That is, I suppose, the regulation thing, the accepted theory, but I cannot see that it removes the difficulty. When science cannot remove a difficulty, it invents another name for it and is quite satisfied. I almost wish now that I had brought Alice Lade, if it was really Alice Lade, to you. Previous to the death of Myas, Alice Lade knew little or no French. She did not speak it at all. She could not understand it when it was spoken. After the death of Myas, that night when I saw her in the laboratory, she spoke French fluently and perfectly, as Myas himself did. Does somnambulism explain that?”

“No, my dear fellow, but unconscious memory does. There seems to be practically no limit to what the unconscious memory can do. I could give you twenty recorded cases of it, which to you or any

other layman would seem almost miraculous. Alice Lade had heard you and Myas talking French together. She had unconsciously remembered the sounds she heard.”

“Afraid it won’t do, Habaden, unless she also unconsciously understood the meaning and the grammar. The French she spoke to me that night was not a repetition of sounds which she might have heard before. She was expressing her thoughts at the moment correctly. However, I need not labour that point. Do you suppose that Myas and I would ever have spoken French in the presence of that girl, knowing that she did not understand it? Can you suspect us of anything so vulgar and barbarous?”

“Very well. Either you or somebody else must have spoken French in her hearing, because that is the only possible explanation.”

“And that,” I said, “is about the least logical observation I ever heard from you, and a man of science should be ashamed of it.”

“I know what I know,” said Habaden dogmatically. “You can give me no other explanation that is as good. For that matter, how do you know that Myas himself did not teach the girl French? He was educating her, you say.”

“I am sure that if he had been teaching her French, he would have mentioned it to me. He was educating her only for his own special purpose. And for that special purpose the usual routine of a girl’s education would have been quite ineffective.”

“Oh, well, it is not only from the medical point of View that you have been wrong, Compton. You have been too sure of your self. You have taken your own way in a manner that seems to me almost unscrupulous. What right had you got to bribe Vulsame to suppress evidence at the inquest? Why did you lose your temper with him and assault him? What business had you got to allow the body of Alice Lade to go unclaimed and to be buried like the body of a pauper? And what about her money? I suppose you have found some equally high-handed way of dealing with that.”

“Well, I think I can give an answer to all your questions. I suppose it was illegal to bribe Vulsame to suppress evidence. All I can say is that I don’t care. It was the right thing to do. I knew perfectly well that Alice Lade did not murder Daniel Myas, and I was determined that she should not suffer from the suspicion of it. Nor am I in the least ashamed that I hit the man. If he ever repeated that swinish innuendo to me, I should hit him again. The body of Alice Lade went unclaimed, because I felt certain that it would be in accordance with her wishes and the wishes of Daniel Myas, and I did not see that anybody else was concerned in the matter. It is not true, by the way, to say that she was buried like a pauper. As to her money, I suppose you will think that my way of dealing with that was high-handed. It seems to me to be all right. She left no will, and as sole trustee for her and with a full power of attorney from her, I exercised my discretion. Everything was realized, and the money sent out to Mrs. Lade in New York. I have her receipts and the trust accounts, if you care to look at them.”

“Don’t be an ass. You know perfectly what I am accusing you of—of taking too much into your own hands, and overriding the law of the land. How did you manage about the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Have you sent conscience-money?”

“I have not, and I intend to send none. If, as I believe, the person who died in that railway accident was Daniel Myas, the duties are already paid.”

“But it was not. It was Alice Lade and nobody else.”

“There we are back again at our first point of difference. I do not believe it was Alice Lade. It was the body of Alice Lade, if you like. It wrote with the hand of Myas. It spoke with the voice of Myas. Its actions were guided by the soul and personality of Myas. That is what I believe. You, of course, consider it a fairy tale.”

“Frankly, I do. But it is no use to discuss it. You have come to a pig-headed conclusion on a subject you have never studied.”

“Nor have you ever studied it, my friend—for the simple reason that you have never had the chance to study it. This is something which has not occurred before in the world.”

We went on to speak of other subjects, and perhaps it was just as well. Neither of us had made the least impression on the other.

IV

I have the habit of sitting up late at night, and have always had it. It is, I believe, generally supposed to be a bad habit, but I have never found out on what grounds. Probably the supposition is that it is invariably accompanied by dissipation and excess, but in my case that supposition would be incorrect. I do not want to be self-righteous. The simple fact is that dissipation and excess have never amused me at all. I appreciate the good things of life, and know that too much of them spoils the appreciation.

In my library at St. James's Place I have a telephone extension. It can be disconnected or connected at will from the main instrument. After ten at night I have this extension connected up. My servants go to bed, and if the telephone rings I can attend to it myself.

Some months after my conversation with Dr. Habaden I dined one night at the club, played three rubbers afterwards, and walked back to my rooms. I changed my coat and sat down by the reading-lamp with a bundle of documents to examine. They had been sent me by the same man who sent me the Peninsular-War Diary, and consisted principally of letters of the same period. Many of these letters were extremely difficult to read. They were written on both sides of the sheet in faded ink. The paper was thin, and the writing was often crossed. When I found any letter which seemed likely to be of some use for my purpose, I made a rough transcript of it in pencil. I had to work with a magnifying-glass, and one may readily believe that my attention was entirely absorbed. I may add that at this time I was in fairly good health, and so far as my memory serves me, no thought of Myas or Alice Lade had entered my mind that day.

As I was working, the telephone bell began to bother me. It did not ring outright. It gave a faint tink-tink at interval. It had happened before, and I had been told that it was due to wires touching, and then

consequently a high wind often caused it. But I personally know nothing whatever about these things. I picked up the receiver because this continuous tink-tink annoyed and interrupted me. I wanted to complain to the exchange. For twenty seconds, perhaps, I heard nothing whatever, and was irritated by the delay, and then came a gentle sound as of some one sighing.

“Look here,” I said. “I want to complain about this telephone. Are you the right person to attend to it?”

The answer came very slowly, with a long wait between the words. It was a voice that I knew perfectly well.

“I am Alice Lade.”

“Yes. Go on, please,” I said. She told me that it was only with extreme difficulty she managed to make words and get them heard by me. She thanked me for what I had done. She told me to worry no longer about the difficulties of the case, and that in a very short time I should understand. “Tell me of Myas,” I said. The voice became so faint that I could hardly hear it. It is my impression that the words were these: “I am Daniel Myas and I am Alice Lade.” After that there was no sound at all. I tried to call the attention of the exchange and failed. Suddenly an idea occurred to me. I went out to the telephone in the hall. I saw then that the extension in the library was disconnected. My servant on going to bed had forgotten to switch me on.

I left it disconnected and went back to the library. I put away my papers, mixed myself a brandy and soda, lit a pipe and sat down to wait. For nearly an hour everything was quite silent, and then very faintly the bell sounded twice. I lifted the receiver and heard a sound like a woman sobbing. The only word that I could catch was “Cannot” twice repeated. The sound broke off suddenly, and after waiting a few seconds I hung the receiver up again and went back to my easy—chair. There I waited for another hour with no result, and then went to bed.

It is difficult to describe exactly what my sensations were. Certainly they had in them nothing of the horror tinged with disgust that I had experienced that night in the laboratory in the garden. They were not feelings of fear exactly, but rather of awe. Later, as I was undressing, together with that awe came something like a feeling of triumph. What would my friend Dr. Habaden have to say to this? What would be his facile explanation? How would he classify it?

I wanted to be quite certain that I had made no mistake and had observed correctly, so as my man was putting out my clothes next morning, I said, “You forgot to connect the telephone up to me last night.”

“Yes, sir,” he said. “Almost the first thing I noticed this morning. Sorry, sir. Don’t think I ever missed that before.”

That morning, as it chanced, I met Dr. Habaden in Albemarle Street and stopped him for a moment. “I want to have a talk with you some time,” I said.

“Right,” said Habaden. “I’ve got a couple of doctors dining with me to—night. You had better join

us. They will probably talk their own shop a good deal, but you won't mind that. They always leave early, and then we can have our talk."

It was rather a nuisance. I had asked a man to dine with me at the club that night. However, it would be easy enough to telephone that I had given him the wrong date by mistake, and I accepted Habaden's invitation.

It happened very much as he said. When dinner was over, these men, who were keen on their profession, did begin to discuss a medical question. To be precise, they were discussing whether the accepted view as to the normal position of the human stomach was really correct. It always interests me to hear people talking when they know what they are talking about, and I listened with interest. It was while Habaden was speaking that the light suddenly broke in on me.

"Well," he was saying, as he described a case, "we percussed him out, marked with the blue pencil and filled him up with bismuth."

Suddenly I saw the whole uselessness of it. I got his special matter-of-fact way of looking at things. I knew beyond a shadow of doubt what his explanation would be. He would simply say that I was suffering from an auditory delusion, and would make wise recommendations.

When the other two men had gone, he turned to rue and said, "Now then, Compton, what was it you wanted to ask me?"

"Nothing really of very great importance, and, as it happens, it no longer matters. It was about a young chap who has been trained as a chauffeur. Some friends of mine are interested in him and asked me if I knew of a berth. He seems to be a first-rate man, and I thought perhaps you or some of your friends in Harley Street might take him on. However, just as I was starting for dinner to-night, I heard on the telephone that he has already got a situation."

"A pity," said Habaden. "I could have placed him. There are not so many really good drivers. By the way, Compton, any further news of the mysterious Myas?"

"No," I said. "I am not going to worry about that any more. My historical work takes up most of my time now. I have got some mighty interesting letters of the Duke of Wellington's that I should like you to see. It was later that night that I fell ill again.

V

I write these last few pages at my cottage on Consay Hill. I have got rid of my flat in St. James's Place, sold the furniture and even sold by far the greater part of my library. When the doctors say that a man has only a few months to live, property presents very little attraction. It seemed best to turn it into money and leave it on deposit at the bank, and in this way to save my executors some trouble. I saw the collections of many years dispersed in the auction—room in one afternoon, and watched it all without the slightest pang. "Man wants but little here below."

It is quite with the approval of the doctors that I have given up London and come down into the country. So far as anything can be good for me, I suppose the quiet and the purer air are good for me. But I have come here much more to please myself than to please the doctors. The fact of the case is that the ordinary routine of life—especially when it has been such a worthless and useless routine as in my case—is not endurable in the face of death. I came here by easy stages, taking three days to do it, in a luxurious car with old Habaden to accompany me. I got through it all right, and now that I am here I really suffer very few limitations. I am not confined to my bed. I can walk in the garden, or even take a short stroll across the common land beyond it. Nominally the number of cigarettes that I may smoke per diem is very strictly limited. In practice I do not worry very much about that or any other medical limitation. I smoke when I want to smoke. The time is very short in any case, and one does not want to be grasping about the last moments.

In one respect my illness has been rather a revelation to me. I knew that I had many acquaintances, but I had not the slightest idea that I had so many friends. I am by no means left continuously alone here. Busy men waste their time by coming down from town to see me. Sometimes they bring with them suggestions for a change of treatment. They tell me wonderful stories of unexpected recoveries. They are uniformly and horribly hopeful. Old Habaden has been among the best of them. He has discovered suddenly that it is good for his health to spend the week-end here. He has acquired quite a new manner of talking to me. He treats my opinions with deference. He no longer lectures me. It is really rather pathetic, because, of course, where he disagreed with me before he still disagrees with me. Only he thinks it might annoy me if he said so. Neither that nor anything else will annoy me any more.

The weather has been very good this spring. There have been many warm and sunny days, and I have spent most of them out of doors in the garden. A long terraced walk gives me a fine view of the valley below. Down there among the trees an excellent trout stream runs. I have the fishing rights over some miles of it, and I shall never throw a fly there again. However, it gives my guests from London something to do, and saves them some hours of their self-inflicted boredom. Old Welsford has made this garden very charming. I like his high walls and archways of clipped yew.

“What are you going to do with that bit you’ve left sticking up there?” I asked him.

“I’m working on that, sir,” said Welsford. “It’s coming into shape already. In a year or two that will be a peacock”

It really seemed rather absurd that I should not see that peacock. I think if I had my choice I would sooner die out here in the garden than in my bed indoors, and it is quite probable that the end will come as I desire. It will be quick. I shall just throw up my hands and drop. And yet this is not a subject about which I think very much. Far more often I find myself still acting and speaking as if I had a year or more before me. For instance, I find old Welsford working in the garden and give him directions. I watch carefully to see them carried out, and feel glad that the result will be good in the flower or fruit. It will perhaps not be till some minutes afterwards that I will suddenly burst out laughing at my own silliness. Of course, whatever the result is I shall not see it. I often wish now that I had spent more of my time in this garden. During the greater part of the week I am alone, but I never

find myself bored here at all. I have more books than I shall have time to read, and I have this writing to finish. It even pleases me to sit on the terrace in the sun and to do absolutely nothing—except to watch the cloud-shadows chasing one another over the pale bracken, or the sparkle of light on the water below in the valley.

Dying men are made much of. They get the idea that they matter. Perhaps that is the reason why I have been so egotistical. Yet it is not my own story that I wish to tell here.

It is an old idea that at the approach of death one may become endowed with spiritual powers of perception, of which one was previously unconscious. It may be—and I suppose it is more likely—that when the body is ill, the mind is no longer to be trusted, and that one has illusions. I write down quite simply that I have seen within the last few days Daniel Myas and Alice Lade, but I have not said a word to any one about it. I can imagine too vividly what would happen if I did. I can see old Habaden stroking his pointed grey beard and saying humbly that my experience is really very extraordinary. And I can imagine tactful questions which would follow, in order to find out if I had suffered from any other form of illusion. I cannot say myself what I actually believe about it. My opinion changes. At times I seem to know definitely that I did see them, and at other times I can put the thing aside and call it, as Habaden would probably call it in private, merely symptomatical.

It was early in the morning between five and six o'clock. Unable to sleep any longer, I had got up and dressed and gone out into the garden. A great deal of mist hung over the hill, not in one unbroken mass, but in flying patches. Sometimes they melted and joined together. Sometimes they seemed to open out like a flower and then vanish in the sunlight. I stood watching the scene for some time, and then I made my way slowly up to the top end of the garden. There is a door here in the high wall, which leads out on to the common. It is kept locked at night, of course, but I had my keys with me. I opened the door, and immediately, within five yards of me and standing with their faces towards me, I saw Myas and Alice Lade.

I saw them for a few seconds only. They had not the appearance of ghosts—filmy things. They looked solid and natural. Afterwards, when I tried to recall everything that I had seen. I noted one point particularly. They were exactly as they had been when I first saw them. Myas was bareheaded, but he wore that flowing necktie which I persuaded him to abandon when he came to London, and looked as young as on the day when I saw him at the Hamiltons'. Alice Lade was in a poor sort of grey dress. It was the dress she had worn when I saw her in the little room behind the shop in Knox Street. The sunlight shone on the red-gold of her hair in a way that lent realism to the picture. The expression on the faces of both of them was similar, and was moreover rather curious. It was the expression of some one who welcomes a person with a smile. The effect upon myself was rather curious also. I had not the slightest feeling of fear. I walked rapidly towards them with my hand outstretched. It was only when they vanished that I began to be afraid. Close to me a couple of sheep moved among the bracken, hidden from sight by it, and their movement startled me. I went back into the garden to my seat on the terrace.

It was impossible for me at first to believe that I had suffered from any delusion, or that my imagination had shaped the flying mists on the hill-side into human forms. I told myself that it was delusion, but I could not make myself believe it. Her hair had caught the sunlight just as it would have done if she had been actually there. Their bodies had not been transparent and had shut out what was

actually behind them. That expression of welcome was to me consolatory. I liked it. It seemed to approve of all that I had done. After I had rested for a few moments, I once more went out on to the common, in the hope that I might see them again. I even called to them, not loudly, by name. But that morning nothing further occurred.

Since then I have twice thought that I saw them, but never with the same clearness or with the same feeling of certainty as on that early morning. I have seen them as figures at a distance in the dusk of the evening. I have seen them amid the trees of a wood on the hill—side. In both these cases I could readily believe it to be a mistake of my senses. But on that early morning it still seems to me at times that there was no mistake, and that I did in reality see them.

This view is strengthened by a conviction for which I can give no reason. It has been born in me and it grows stronger every day. I believe in it, as I believe in my own existence. It is a conviction that the story of Myas and Alice Lade is not yet finished, and that at some future time I shall take part in that story.

I suppose no man goes through life without at some time trying to picture what happens after death. Because we do not know, we take an analogy and make a guess. For a long time it satisfied me to think that just as all the rivers run into the sea, so all the personalities are hereafter merged into that of a supreme being. I find myself unable any longer to hold that theory. It had its philosophical consolations for me. I had missed most of the best things that life holds. My own personality had been balked and insignificant. I believed that death ended it, partly, perhaps, because I wished death to end it.

As I have said, I can no longer hold that belief, though I can give little plausible reason for the change in me. The fact remains that I face death with some of that feeling of pleasurable excitement with which one starts out on a journey that promises new sights and new adventures.

What awaits me on that journey must necessarily be beyond my power to imagine. The souls of the dead are cognizable, not by body nor by mind, but in some way beyond human experience or thought. It was, I think, with great difficulty that these two people, whom I shall shortly rejoin, sent me any message from the life beyond. The message came in a form that science would call illusion. It may be. It does not necessarily seem to me to condemn it. It does not lessen in the least the hold it has upon me, and my conviction that I shall now begin rather than end my story.

Thus, then, I start out with pretty good hopes—*per iter tenebricosum unde negant redire quemquam*.

THE END